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THE SUPERIOR FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION GAMES MAGAZINE

Editorial

With Christmas looming ever closer, we thought we'd try and cheer things up by putting a Santa Claus on the front cover. Of course, being Adventurer he's not quite human. To be exact, he's erm...um... well he's not human anyway.

Staying with the Christmas theme, we have a couple of wintry articles for you, and have tried to put as many items in our Shop Window for all you late shoppers as possible.

This issue sees even more pages devoted to content, and less on advertising, than we've managed before, a true testament to our promise that we are trying to give the customer what he wants.

For scenario lovers, there are 3 this time, including one from the pen of our very own Robin Parry. Take a read of Janet Vialls' article; it is a rewarding experience, especially if you think you know all about the 'D&D sexist' debate.

Have a great Christmas and New Year, Everyone.

Ste Dillon.

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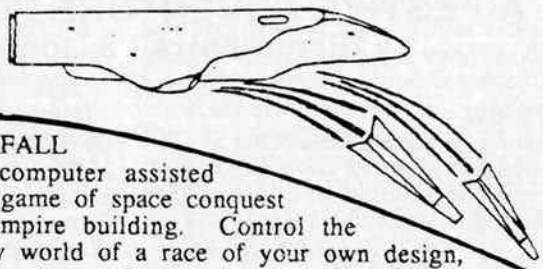

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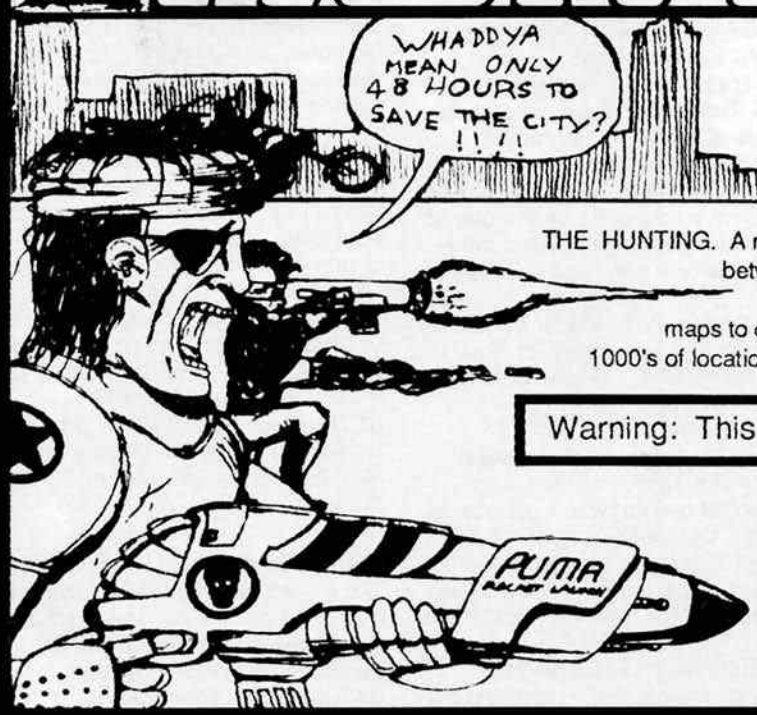

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Christmas Cheer

A FESTIVE ADVENTURE FOR PARANOIA

by Simon Farrell & Jon Sutherland

Overview

Someone is putting chemicals in the water-supply system of *Complex Alpha*. Your mission, should you decide to accept it (and only traitors refuse), is to find out who by staking out the water tanks on level **Z13** and, if necessary, tracing them to their above-ground source.

The Gamesmaster's information on this adventure is given after the (optional) list of Player Characters.

Player Statistics

Name: Charles-O-WNS-1
Service: Internal Security
Mutant Power: Advanced Vision
Sec Society: Frankenstein Destroyers
Rank: 2 **Credits:** 530
Weapon: Laser Pistol 36%

Str: 16	End: 13	Ag: 7
MD: 11	Moxie: 13	Chutz: 17
MA: 9	PI: 14	CC: 45
DB: +1	MB: 0	MelB: -5%
AimWeap:+1%	Comp:+4%	Repair:-2%
Believe: +15%		

Skills:
Basics (1), Aimed Weapon (2), Laser (3), Pistol (4)
Melee Combat (2), Unarmed (3)
Personal Development (1), Leadership (2)

Name: Joseph-R-DVR-1
Service: HPD & Mind Control
Mutant Power: Charm
Secret Society: Death Leopard
Rank: 1 **Credits:** 100
Weapon: Laser 26%

Str: 14	End: 17	Ag: 14
MD: 7	Moxie: 3	Chutz: 10
MA: 14	PI: 12	CC: 35
DB: +1	MB: -1	MelB: +7%
AimWeap:-4%	Comp:-25%	Repair:+5%
Believe: -1%		

Skills:
Basics (1), Aimed Weaon (2), Laser (3)
Personal Development (1), Communication (2), Spurious Logic (3)

Name: James-R-TMN-1
Service: Production Logistics & Commissary
Mutant Power: Advanced Hearing
Secret Society: Pro-Tech
Rank: 1 **Credits:** 100
Weapon: Laser 28%

Str: 13	End: 17	Ag: 5
MD: 9	Moxie: 8	Chutz: 17
MA: 17	PI: 6	CC: 30
DB: 0	MB: -1	MelB: -10%
AimWeap:-2%	Comp:-3%	Repair:+12%
Believe: +15%		

Skills:
Basics (1), Aimed Weapon (2), Laser (3)
Personal Development (1)
Technical Services (1), Engineering (2)

Name: Kent-R-CLK-1
Service: Armed Forces
Mutant Power: Superior Strength
Secret Society: Communist
Rank: 1 **Credits:** 100
Weapon: Laser 29%

Str: 13	End: 11	Ag: 16
MD: 10	Moxie: 11	Chutz: 9
MA: 11	PI: 10	CC: 30
DB: 0	MB: 0	MelB: +12%
AimWeap:-1%	Comp:+1%	Repair:+1%
Believe: -3%		

Skills:
Basics (1), Aimed Weapon (2), Laser (3)
Personal Development (1)
Hostile Environment (1), Survival (2)

Name: Mike-R-MKN-1
Service: Power Services
Mutant Power: Empathy
Secret Society: Purge
Rank: 1 **Credits:** 100
Weapon: Laser 37%

Str: 15	End: 15	Ag: 13
MD: 14	Moxie: 3	Chutz: 10
MA: 12	PI: 12	CC: 40
DB: +1	MB: -1	MelB: +5%
AimWeap:+7%	Comp:-25%	Repair:+2%
Believe: -1%		

Skills:
Basics (1), Aimed Weapon (2), Laser (3)
Personal Development (1)
Tech Services (1), Robotics (2)

Gamesmaster's Information

The PCs given on the preceding page are the suggested characters for this scenario. However, if the players wish to use their own characters and you are feeling in a generous mood, they may do so. However, the following points should be taken into consideration:

The adventure as it stands is for **RED-level** Troubleshooters, and pretty clumsy ones at that. To upgrade it, you should add more *Maintenance bots* and more *Guardbots* where necessary, and also place heavy emphasis on the use of the experimental equipment listed below. Each item, in its own way, can be lethal to its user.

If different characters are to be used, there should be a mixture of Secret Societies. Membership should include at least:
1 member of '*Purge*'
1 member of '*Frankenstein Destroyers*'
1 member of '*Pro Tech*'

Maybe the GM can throw in a member of the **'Death Leopards'**, just to liven things up a bit, but the main thrust is to have at least three antagonists who will receive secret orders from their societies.

Secret Society Messages

Members of *Purge* and *Frankenstein Destroyers* (Mike-R-MKN and Charles-O-WNS) should each be told that the action against the water supply is not due to their own society, but that if possible they should perpetuate it or make it worse. The *Pro-Tech member* should be warned that at least one member of the party is anti-technology, possibly a *Death Leopard*, and that he should be on the lookout for evidence. The *Internal Security* member should be told that Kent-R-CLK is a suspected *Communist*.

Troubleshooters' Briefing

The Troubleshooters should be briefed by a member of *Technical Services* and a member of *Internal Security* (suggested stats are given at the end of the scenario). The IS operative is obviously there to uncover potential traitors, while the Technical Services operative is there to give technical information (but make the PCs work for it!).

The briefing covers the following points:

Someone is contaminating the water supply for part of Alpha Complex. The contaminated water originates in the storage tanks in Level Z13.

The water tanks on Level Z13 are fed by long pipes from an above ground water source known as The Rez. What a 'Rez' is, or where it is actually located are, of course, items for which the Troubleshooters are not cleared.

Only maintenance bots are allowed on Level Z13, and the area is classified **Indigo** -The Troubleshooter leader, **Charles-O-WNS**, will be given the entry code for the area.

There is a little-used passageway from Level Z13 to the Rez. This passageway is clearance **Ultraviolet**, and so not even its location is allowed to be told to the Troubleshooters. Nevertheless, they must -if circumstances dictate it - follow this passageway to the water source and examine the area for traitors and saboteurs.

Equipment

This is left to the GM to decide. Note that all PCs must carry long-range communicators to keep in touch with The Computer at all times. Beyond that and their lasers, be hard on them. They're not trained to use much else anyway.

Experimental Equipment

On offer to the Troubleshooters are the following items of experimental equipment, found lying on a table in one corner of the briefing room. Needless to say, there are no operating instructions with them, and anyone who does not volunteer to test at least one item will be held in a dim light by the Briefing Officers.

ID Number: XPE-1001-2731
Description: A dull black ovoid with no apparent openings. About the size of a grenade.

Explanation: This is supposed to be a 'bot summoner. Its top half twists through 180 degrees and the device will then emit a soft beeping noise which will summon any bots, no matter what their type, within 500 metres. They will home in on the device and await orders - all orders will be cancelled when the device is ON, and

unfortunately it is very difficult to turn off. The top sticks in the ON position, and only at least ten minutes work and much grunting and groaning will turn it off. Use of this device should put the party hip-deep in bots who will then follow them everywhere (or shoot them).

ID Number: XPE-1227-3331
Description: A bulky backpack-harness, with a single white ceramic disc, 1 metre in diameter and about twenty cm thick, strapped to the body by means of an elaborate harness and with a pocket-calculator-sized control box attached to it by a very thick lead. The disc is covered with stencilled warnings, eg.: **DO NOT TOUCH, NOT TO BE EXPOSED TO TEMPERATURES ABOVE 30 DEGREES, WARNING - HIGH VOLTAGE** and so on.
Explanation: This backpack and harness is a new direction in personal protection (as is the impact suit, XPE-1227-2934). When the backpack is turned on, a strong magnetic field is created around the wearer and any lasers or other weapons fired at the wearer will be deflected. Unfortunately, any metal object weighing less than 10Kg will also be strongly attracted to the wearer. Turning the thing on is, of course, a lot easier than turning it off.

ID Number: XPE-1179-6842
Description: A 10cm-diameter tube with handgrips and trigger and one end disappearing into a bulky shoulder-rest and (presumably) magazine. It looks like some kind of weapon, and the Technical Services briefing officer will wince whenever a PC picks it up.

Explanation: This weapon - and it really is a weapon - is much too dangerous to use indoors. What it fires are, in effect, small black holes, which home in on the target and destroy it. Two inconspicuous knobs - too inconspicuous to notice at first glance - control both distance to target and length of lifetime of the black hole, set respectively at zero and ten minutes. Maximum lifetime is two hours. Every time the weapon is fired there is a 30% chance of a malfunction in which the weapon consumes both itself and the firer.

ID Number: XPE-1022-4735
Description: A simple coil of rope, about 30m long.
Explanation: This is a simple coil of rope, with a core of memory plastic and a tiny processor at one end. In response to verbal commands, the coil will knot itself into various shapes. The processor is activated by the word "Knot" (which sounds a lot like "Not", unfortunately), and then subsequently responds to code letters A (a), B (be), C (see), D (de-termined, etc), E (E-asy), and so on. It is deactivated by the simple command "disentangle". Obvious, really. It is up to the GM to decide what shape the rope assumes on each given command.

ID Number: XPE-985-1011
Description: A hand-held device similar to a communicator, but with a flat grey screen and several controls.
Explanation: This device is a 'Book', containing encyclopaedic information on all kinds of subjects, all of them beginning with the letter 'Z'. It both displays and recites the information, and unfortunately the on/off switch is a little temperamental, being inclined to switch the machine on in the most embarassing circumstances (like when the party is hiding from that really mean guardbot).

ID Number: XPE-1227-2934
Description: A suit of what looks like armour, except that it is very flexible to wear. It will probably only fit two or three members of the party.
Explanation: This is a suit of Impact Armour designed to go rigid when hit by a solid object. Unfortunately, it can't distinguish a friendly pat on the back or a desperate dive for cover from a missile attack, and tends to go rigid at the slightest chance, leaving the wearer in the position of a turtle on its back. The effect, unfortunately, doesn't seem to wear off very quickly. Minimum time for being frozen rigid is 15 minutes.

The Scenario

Due to a computer foul-up, two teams of Troubleshooters have been ordered to carry out the same investigation, and this second team are likely to run across the PCs when they're doing something which could be interpreted as sabotage. Abbreviated stats for the second party are at the end of the scenario.

Level Z13 (see map)

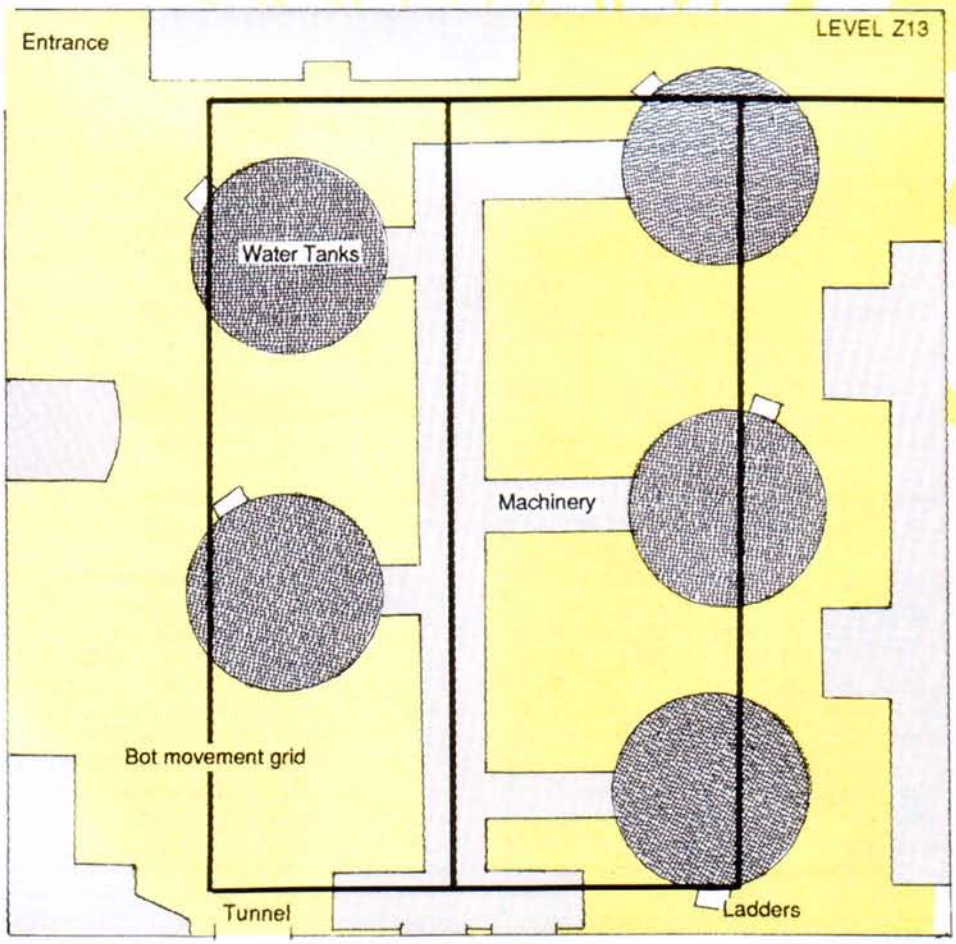
Entrance to level Z13 is by a single sealed door on level W11. The area beyond is in complete darkness. Humans never go here, and the maintenance bots use IR sensors, so unless the Troubleshooters are equipped with IR goggles or torches (certainly not all of them should be), they will have to grope their way along.

The water tanks are massive, million-gallon containers, each one 20 metres on a side, with ladders bolted to the side which lead directly to the sealed tops of the tanks. Each seal is the size of a manhole and operates in a similar way, with a circular wheel in the centre of the hatch which must be turned to allow the hatch to swing back and a person to enter. Breaking the seal on any hatch will call a maintenance bot at once. These bots travel on tracks just below the ceiling of level Z13 and are programmed to:
a). remove any obstruction, and
b). close the seals.

The level of water in each tank is within 5cm of the top and there are no internal handholds. If a clumsy bot were to knock a PC into the tank, he or she would drown. Alternatively, knocking the PC off the ladder is an equally valid method of removing the obstruction. It's 15 metres to the floor...

None of the seals on the tanks appear to have been tampered with. A good time for the arrival of the second team of Troubleshooters - the NPC ones - would be as the PCs are investigating the tanks. Mistaken identity -blam, blam - oops sorry, seems to sum up the result. For NPC stats, see the end of the scenario.

Assuming the PCs survive this initial investigation, they must trace the enormous input pipes back from the tanks



and through the wall of the complex, making sure that there has been no tampering there. Then they will have to search for the hidden entrance to the secret tunnel - it's easy enough to find - get it open, and follow the tunnel to the surface.

The Tunnel

This tunnel is a relic of the days before The Computer, and so The Computer sees it as a weak spot. It's rated ULTRAVIOLET for a very good reason - the guardbots who make sure that unauthorised personnel do not enter. Two of these guardbots are stationed just behind the entrance to the tunnel, and two more at the top exit. They are standard guardbots, although perhaps a little trigger-happy after having been stationed here for the past twenty years without even a scrubot to make fun of. The tunnel entrance is not voice coded, and has a simple padlock which the Troubleshooters will have to remove before entering.

The tunnel itself is so narrow that the PCs will only be able to march two abreast, and its walls are solid enough to reflect laser fire. Ricochets! It slopes gradually upward and ends abruptly in a dark, wide, vertical well. When all the Troubleshooters are gathered in the well, a door will slide down, cutting them off from the complex. (It will slide back again in an hour's time, but they won't know that). The walls of the well are completely smooth and totally unclimbable.

In fact the well is a lift, of sorts. When any of the players says the word "UP", they will find themselves caught by a strong magnetic force which will gradually haul them up the well by whatever items of metallic equipment each holds. A laser is enough, but belt buckles would do just as well. Even tooth fillings will feel an urge to fly...

It should be noted that if the PC who wears the white ceramic backpack were to use it in this small place, he would find himself squeezed between the walls of the well like a pip in an orange, and shot out of the top like a bullet from a gun barrel. (The walls and the backpack have the same magnetic popularity, and like poles repel...)

Once the Troubleshooters reach the top, they are on the verge of encountering the outside. See the example at the beginning of the Players handbook for a good approach to this problem. The top of the well is a small, opaque dome with a single hatch which will open as the players reach the top. Outside, the ground is white...

The Outside (see map)

It is winter; bells are ringing, reindeer are holding red-nose contests, and a little fat man with a white beard is stuck in a chimney. In other words, it's Christmas! Snow lies deep on the ground and the Troubleshooters should be given the impression that there is some horrible plague on the land. Never having been out of the temperature-controlled environment of Alpha Complex, they should also be quite subsceptible to the temperature; in fact, a head-cold wouldn't be out of the question; in fact... ah... ah... ahchoo! There. More evidence of a horrible plague. The person who sneezed is obviously contaminated and a danger to the rest of the party...

Most of the above-ground part of this scenario is left as an exercise to the referee. Remember, these Troubleshooters shouldn't know ANYTHING about the outside. Anyone who does must be a member of the **Sierra Club**, and The Computer discourages Secret Societies, remember? A few interesting encounters might be animal tracks (what kind of weapon does that?), a snow storm (gaah! The Plague!), ice (just how thick is it?) and snowdrifts. Plus, of course, the snowball which hits one of the party on the back of the neck just as they are getting used to all of this.

A snowball? Yes. And a dirty looking urchin who runs away very fast after throwing it. Perhaps with a few bars of "Tis the reason to be jolly, tra-la-la-la-la" thrown over his shoulder. Catching him will not be easy - he's wearing snow-shoes (probably some hideous birth defect) and he's lighter than any of the Troubleshooters, able to skip happily away over a very broad expanse of thin ice (covered, of course, by an equally thin layer of snow).

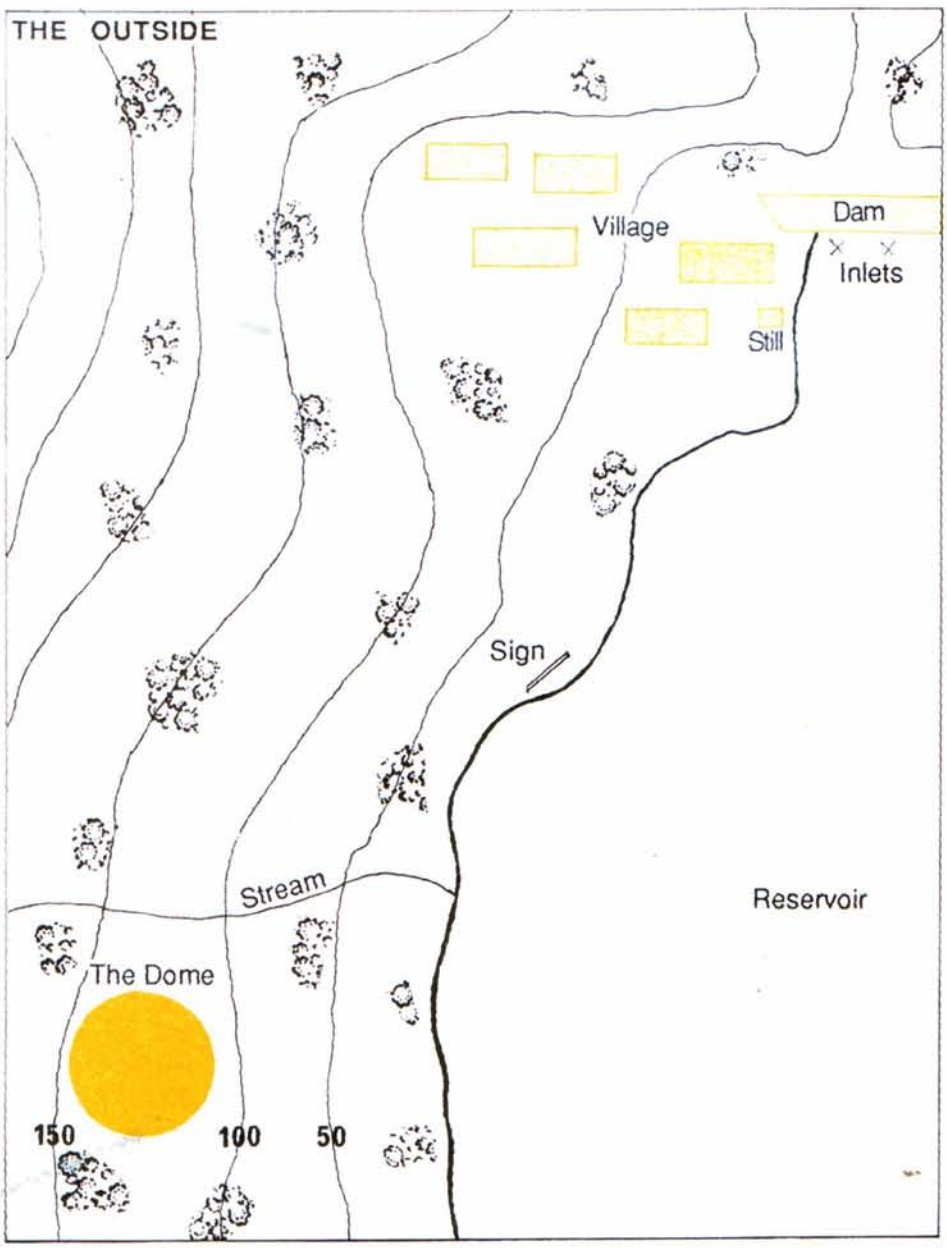
Thus, the party will find The **Rez** by actually falling into it.

They shouldn't realise this immediately, of course, but conveniently near to where they have fallen in there is an ancient, snow-covered wooden sign which, when brushed clear, bears the words: **Appleby Reservoir. Private Property.** Enough said.

About a kilometer away, smoke rises from a small native village.

The Village

The village is a small community inhabited by some very elite members of the Sierra Club secret society. They take turns at coming up here to spend a week or so before returning to the rigours of life Inside. It is surprisingly - or perhaps not, considering the occupants - well-equipped and comfortable. All the houses have double-glazing (looted from a nearby town) and fireplaces, and they're all at least two storeys high. Don't forget that such dwelling places are totally unknown to the Troubleshooters and for all they know, each house is an alien spaceship,



occupied by a battle squad of six-legged monsters!

On entering the village, the Troubleshooters are greeted by Jon-I-HAC-1, the town's Mayor, who in life Down Under is something very big in HPD & Mind Control. He greets them all with a big smile and the words "*Merry Christmas*!" He knows nothing about the contamination problem and automatically assumes that the Troubleshooters are renegades who have made it to the Outside and want to live free of The Computer's influence. He intends to treat them all to a little Christmas cheer, then see them on their way further downstream - can't ruin the neighbourhood with a few REDs and a GREEN, can we? Unless the players do something to disabuse him of this notion, he will be very friendly. If - as they almost certainly will - they make a gaff and admit their true reason for being here, he will summon the two guardbots which once stood inside the dome (remember I mentioned them a while ago? Thought I'd forgotten, didn't you?). These bots have been programmed, albeit a little clumsily, to respond to Jon's orders. While the players are busy fighting the bots, Jon will have disappeared, along with every other soul in the village. In fact, they've taken refuge in an underground bunker, but the Troubleshooters will never be able to find it.

The source of the contamination is not difficult to find, although it may be difficult to recognise. Behind the house nearest the reservoir is a small wooden shed with what appears to be a contraption for torturing Troubleshooters and extracting their vital essences. In fact, it's a still, but since there will be no one around to tell them that, they'll never guess. This is one of the Sierra Club's little experiments in Christmas Cheer, but it has gone wrong. Several empty barrels, lying on their sides by the edge of the reservoir (ice-free here), attest to the bad taste of the alcohol distilled. After a single taste, the whole lot has been dumped into the water. Unfortunately, the intake pipes for the Z13 level are almost directly below, and a quantity of the wood-alcohol (basically meths, for those connoisseurs of the substance) has been taken in by the pipes and distributed to the citizens below. The intakes are clearly visible to anyone who wants to look, and there is enough alcohol remaining in the barrels to provide all the proof the Troubleshooters will need. The trickiest thing will be making the link, and naturally they will believe that it was done deliberately. If they like, they can satisfy their violent instincts on the village. The houses burn quite well.

Once the problem has been identified, nothing remains but for the Troubleshooters to return (back down the well -step out into thin air and say "down") to level Z13 (the guardbots in the tunnel have been replaced by this time) and make their reports. Of course, if any of them wish to stay Outside, they may do so, although this should be discouraged (surely one of the party is loyal to the computer?). If they all remain, haven't they forgotten something? Their communicators... which have built-in location devices. They can expect the Vulture squadron at any moment...

Non-Player Characters

Internal Security Briefing agent:
Gordon-Y-MNB-2. YELLOW Clearance.
Moxie: 15 Chutzpah: 2
Mean and nasty and very suspicious. Picks up on EVERYTHING said by the PCs and manages to twist it into a statement of disloyalty.

Tech Services Briefing Agent:
Malcolm-Y-PCG-1. YELLOW Clearance.
Moxie: 16 Chutzpah: 10
Slightly more friendly than Gordon, but the PCs are really beneath his notice. He's sure this is just a routine mission - all they have to do is walk through the door, take a look around and come back. What's all the fuss about? Why are they wary of testing this neat new experimental equipment? Maybe Gordon has the right idea. He's more concerned for the experimental equipment than for the PCs, and this should be obvious. He answers any technical questions with a look of frank disbelief, then rattles off an answer so fast and with so much jargon that it's completely useless.

Jon-I-HAC-1:
Moxie: 16 Chutzpah: 14 Strength: 12
Agility: 11
He's smart, fast, and very contemptuous of the PCs, although too polite to show it if they don't make any trouble. He doesn't see them as any more of a threat than a bunch of children armed with lasers.

NPC Troubleshooters

There is a provision in level Z13 for a second team of Troubleshooters to turn up just as the firefight with the maintenance bots is dying down. This second team has essentially the same orders as the first and will assume that the PCs are actually the saboteurs. If any survive after the shootout, perhaps the survivors could be the clones of those PCs who got killed! Listed here are simply five To Hit probabilities for the NPC Troubleshooters' lasers:
NPC1: laser (26%)
NPC2: laser (35%)
NPC3: laser (28%)
NPC4: laser (32%)
NPC5: laser (24%)

Guardbots

Each Guardbot is shaped like a miniature tank, 3 metres long, and has two turrets, one lower than the other to give a good field of fire for both. The lower turret contains a sonic rifle and a laser rifle; the upper turret contains a sonic rifle, a laser rifle and a tangler.

Guardbot:
Move: Walk Speed
Weapons: 2 sonic rifles, 2 laser rifles, 1 tangler
Attack: 50%
Armour: Kevlar equivalent.

There are two guardbots in the tunnel leading from level Z13 to the well and two guardbots Outside, under the command of Jon-I-HAC-1.

Maintenance bots

The maintenance bots in level Z13 move around the water distribution and storage area by means of a grid of tracks on the ceiling of the big room.

They are about a metre in height and their tops are simple motorized wheeled dollies. Each bot has sensors in its base and sides, 2 heavy work arms and 4 light manipulator arms. One of the manipulator arms contains a laser (for welding purposes), which will be used if the bot is attacked.

Maintenance bot:
Move: Walk/Run speed
Weapons: 1 laser pistol
Attack: 30%
Armour: Plate equivalent

There are four maintenance bots in level Z13, and one of them has a transplanted guardbot brain (GMs choice which one), which gives it an Attack chance of 45%.

SHOPWINDOW

THE ROLEMASTER COMPANION (£7.95)

by I.C.E for Rolemaster

This is the latest addition to the **Rolemaster** game system, and contains lots of new material. It also replaces some sections which GMs may wish to use instead of those in the original game, including a new smoother stat. bonus/development point/spell point chart, which irons out the jumps in the old chart.

Once a character has been started, there are eight new character professions they can follow. I.C.E. have introduced *Barbarians* and *acrobatic* thieves called *Burglars*. They have also brought in *Druids*, although these are really Animists with different base lists. To the semi-spell users they have added *Delvers*, *Paladins* and *Nightblades*, who are basically mentalism semi-spell user assassins.

The remaining two new professions are potentially the most powerful, and they could easily unbalance a game. The *High Warrior Monk* is a warrior monk who has been taught his or her profession since birth. The other new profession that I certainly wouldn't like to meet is the *Archmage*. These people are pure spell users in all three realms, and get to pick their own base lists.(!)

There is a large section on new spells and spells lists, in which I.C.E. have introduced a new type of magic to the Rolemaster world; *Arcane Magic*. This fits in with the existing system by being the magic that existed before the seperation into *Essence*, *Channeling* and *Mentalism*, and contains elements of all three realms. There are also more conventional base lists for the new professions and some new open and closed lists. I am glad to see **Warding Ways**, which is the mentalism equivalent of **Rune Mastery**, though I cannot see much use in a campaign for the **Midwifery** list.

The new spells do not end there though. There are spells which are not rigidly associated with existing lists. The first section of these covers 1st to 50th level spells. The second section is for those GMs running really high level campaigns, and has a selection of 60th, 75th and 90th level spells, and even one 100th level spell that can destroy a continent!

If all this is not enough, there are new background options which could make a character even more powerful, but could also prove to be really nasty. The worst for characters must be *split personality*, where the character has 1-3 other personalities, each of which are characters in their own right. The worst for GMs is probably *destiny sense*, where the character knows the path which will lead to a desired objective.

Among the other material in this book are new character races, including the old friends **dark elves** and **half-orcs**. There are also some new nasties, and if you thought the **Ordainers** in *Creatures and Treasures* were powerful, wait till you read the stats for **Black Reavers**. Items have also been given a boost, in the form of *personalities* and *will*, which allows them to fight for control with their users.

All in all this is a lovely additon to Rolemaster, well up to I.C.E.'s usual standard, and any serious GM should have no second thoughts about adding it to their collection.

John S. Davies

DAY OF AL'AKBAR (£5.50)

by TSR for AD&D

Well, well, well, Gary Gygax really must have left Lake Geneva at last. I say this since our jolly old EGG was really keen on the 'family' image - and these playboy lasses on the front cover would certainly not have got passed in the old days. Maybe TSR want to attract a more 'adult' audience, or just the Sun readers. However, ignoring the low-life, let's see what it has to offer the rest of us...

As we open the package, out falls a wonderful bundle of colour, the city map of *Khaibar*. Big A1 size, beautifully done, it has none of those annoying give-away labels, nor does it have the ugly grey squares which obliterated the Lhankmar map. A nice map, backed with useful hexes, and a good start to the package. Amazingly, for a paid-up TSR hate-mailer, this scenario is looking good.

Here goes... the adventures are... well that doesn't really matter, suffice to say that the mission is an urgent one and if it doesn't fit your usual PCs, the pre-rolled characters are pretty good. The setting is a fantasy North Africa, the decrepit city of Khaibar, its bandit leader *Al'Farzikh* and the quest for the holy cup and Talisman of *Al'Akbar*, once great Sultan of the city.

Whilst I was at first rather put out to move rapidly through three extremely silly and unnecessary encounters in the trek to the city, then to move, with out any ado into a sewer dungeon, I was relieved to discover that I had fallen foul of the layout of the scenario. After the so-so dungeon we discovered a well detailed city with some real potential for role-playing. Unfortunately, there are also some silly monsters wandering around, and I would recommend that referees exercise the ultimate discretion about the 'Mad Dog of the Desert' sub - plot.

The scenario is flawed, it doesn't explain the city in the best way - as an overall. It presents good material in a depressingly linear dungeon-style, ie paragraph 49- 'The Killer Wombat', etc. (not really). It is, however, an excellent scenario for AD&D, providing plenty of excitement with a wonderful setting, well detailed and researched. The scenario is not at all bad, and a good referee could easily ignore it and just develop the setting itself, it's certainly worth it. D&Ders should buy this, others wouldn't

do badly in investing as well - not at all bad!

Tom Zunder

BATTLETECH- DECISION AT THUNDER RIFT (£2.95)

Novel by William H Keith Jr.
Published by FASA

Highly recommended.

If you are familiar with the **Battletech** world then you will be familiar with the background of this book. If that is the case, then you should go out and buy the book and probably will anyway, so I'll say no more to you.

To those of us who are unfamiliar with the universe of the Battletech game, or are uncertain that any RPG can be sucessfully transferred to paper, the story goes as follows: **Trellwan**, a backwater world which has some small strategic importance in the endless fight between Combine and Confederation, is garrisoned by a small Confed Mech Lance, (a group of BattleMechs - giant, armoured humanoid machines piloted into battle by a single MechWarrior) Carlyle's Commandos. Twenty year old *Grayson Death Carlyle*, around whom the book is based, is an apprentice MechWarrior to his father, 'The Captain'.

Disaster strikes Carlyle's Commandos when a trojan-horse raid by pirates kills the leader and his staff and forces the others to flee off-world. Grayson is left for dead in the confusion of the attack but manages to escape to the city of Sarghad, where he attempts to form a core of resistance against the invaders.

After several nasty encounters - not all with the enemy - Grayson has managed to form the core of his own Batle Mech group and with its aid he fights a diversionary battle which he hopes will let a starship leave the system and bring help from the Confederation.

So much for the bare bones of the story, and the reader who doesn't know anything about the Battletech universe might well be forgiven for snorting and passing quickly along to another title. However, I have rarely seen a story which pulls you in in quite the way this one does. It is tightly written, the action never stops and more importantly the characters are believable; you care whether they win or lose. By the end of the book I found myself wondering a) when the next one in the series will be out, b) when I could find time to pick up a copy of the game, and c) whether FASA are looking for other authors because I'd like to write one of these myself! FASA have succeeded in their joint purpose: to interest readers in Battletech and, more importantly, to entertain them. I would say they have done both, and very well too.

Simon Farrell

THE IMMORTAL STORM (£5.50)

by TSR for D&D Immortals

Remember the sexy ladies of Khaibar? Well here we at last have a sexy elf and a hunky bloke to go with the bosom brigade. Can't really complain about this cover too much really, the molten lava they walk around in almost-naked does after all give a hint as to the magnitude of adventure to expect. This is, after all, the first of the Immortal scenario packs, and we're all expecting something rather epic. We are not to be disappointed....

Nix, Hierarch of Entropy, wants the player characters' help, to rid the multiverse of the malignant maelstrom which threatens all of space and time. A solution of riddles, the Immortals game takes D&D to its ultimate conclusion, magic and technology become truly intermingled in the mechanics of D&D sorcery. The strange thing is, that when PCs can transfer across the planes, pluck starfire from flaming suns and use wishes like ship computers, it all becomes absolutely excellent fun. The setting is so cosmic, it's a totally different game, and a very appealing one.

Don't get me too wrong, either, one of the best bits of the adventure is when the Immortals have to visit the dour plane of technology, where their powers cannot help them. New York City is a dangerous place for stranded immortals as well...

Frank Mentzer has come up with a really good one here, a scenario so far beyond Basic D&D as to really be a totally different game and setting altogether. I wasn't expecting to enjoy this, but I found the ideas really good fun and was tempted to go and play the game really and properly... I guess that's a yes for the Immortal D&D owners, and a suggestion to the lower levels that they might skip the intermediate stuff altogether and have an ogle at this little lot... never thought I'd say that.

Tom Zunder

LORIEN AND THE HALLS OF THE ELVEN SMITHS (£7.95)

Published by I.C.E

Lorien is the eighth Middle Earth Campaign Module in ICE's growing range of Tolkien based sourcebooks. It is in many ways the least useful of them released so far. The nature of Lorien does not really lend itself to a starting position for an adventure.

The attention to detail is very much up to the standard we have come to expect from this series. **Lorien** proports to be usable with not only *Middle Earth Roleplaying* and *Rolemaster*, but also with *AD&D* and *Fantasy Hero*. Whilst the conversion details are fairly straightforward enough for AD&D, the Fantasy Hero guidelines are less than satisfactory. Indeed they say, 'the conversion of characters and creatures requires some mathematics but if you play Fantasy Hero, the task should not present a great obstacle.'

The adventure outlines provided are rather brief. They cover the various periods of Middle Earth that are popular to set campaigns in. The nine adventures cover only two pages of the sixty-two, so they are not exactly 'fleshed out'.

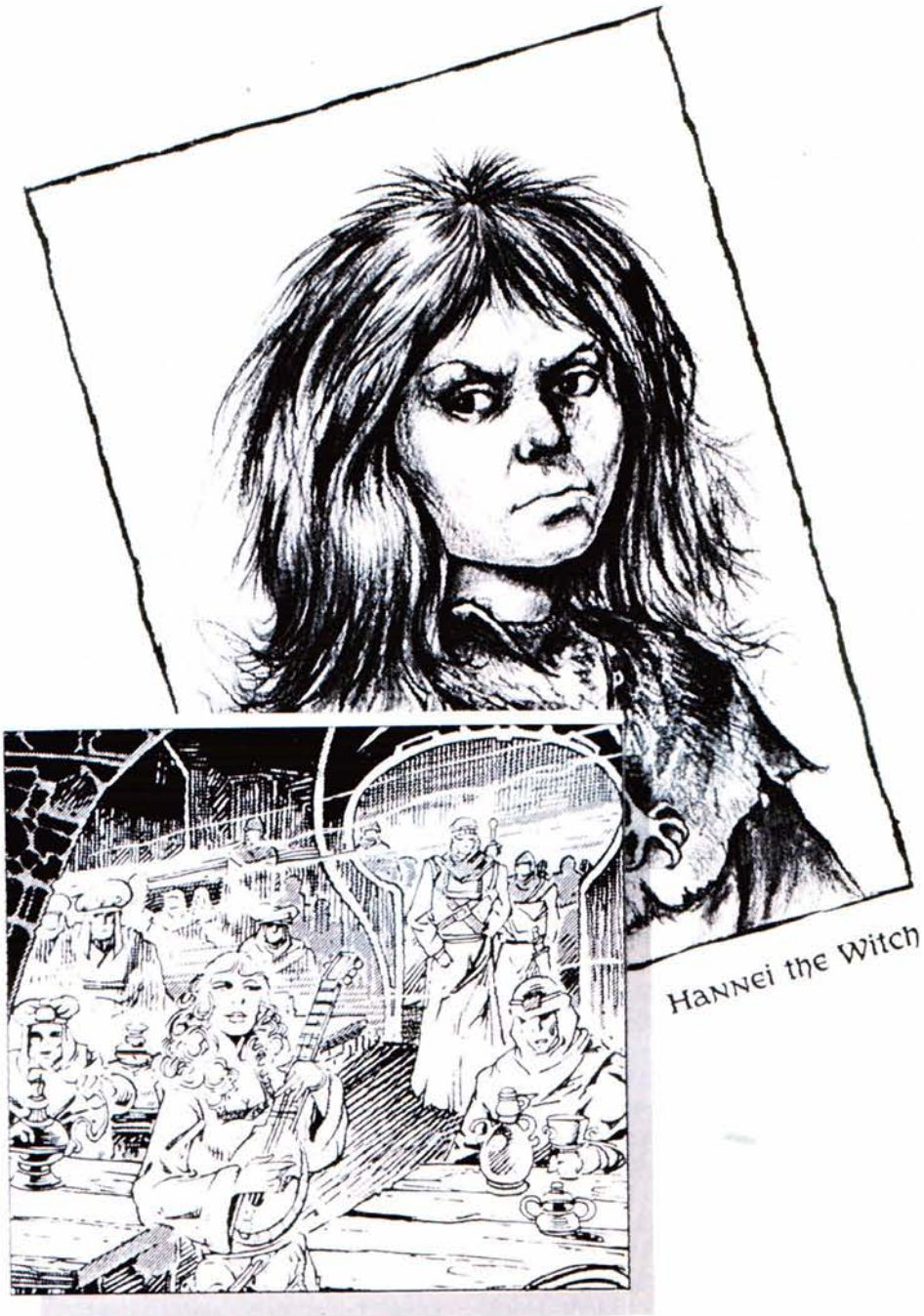
Always particularly impressive are the maps, of which there are seven, plus the standard Middle Earth map. The large scale maps of the surroundings will enable you to link up ones that were included in *Isengard* and *Riders of Rohan*. It is a pity that they are printed on both sides, so they are no good as poster wall maps.

Jon Sutherland

PHANTOM OF THE NORTHERN MARCHES (£3.95)

Published by I.C.E

'Phantom' is the first 'ready-to-run' module by a British writer. The adventure follows very much in the style of module writing here in the UK; specific scenarios written in such a way that you *can* use them in any location if required. Normally, 'Phantom' is based just to the east of Weathertop and to the west of the Trollshaws. There are three main scenarios, all with a slant towards hunting for someone or something in a very inhospitable place. Generally, 'Phantom'



is quite good, although it does not offer anything very original in scenario content.
Jon Sutherland

GENERIC UNIVERSAL ROLE PLAYING SYSTEM (£14.95)

by Steve Jackson Games

GURPS or *Generic Universal Role Playing system* as it is less well known is intended to be a comprehensive set of rules capable of encompassing every genre from Fantasy to Science Fiction.

This boxed Basic set contains two rule books (one of 72 pages and one of 80 pages), a scenario book, a book of charts and tables and a small asssortment of 'Cardboard Heroes' 25mm fantasy miniatures.

Rule Book 1 deals solely with **character generation**, which is based on a points-allocation system similar to **Champions**. The four main attributes of *Health, Dexterity, Intelligence* and *Strength* and any skills and/or advantages desired are 'bought' for a varying number of points up to a maximum total (for beginning characters) of 100.

The characters can also be given a variety of *disadvantages* both mental and physical at a negative points cost. This allows extra points to be allocated to skills or attributes without exceeding the 100 points limit. For example, the character can accept the disadvantage of **Kleptomania** (-15 points) allowing him to buy the extra advantages of **Night Vision** (10 points) and **double jointedness** (5 points).

The range of advantages/disadvantages is quite broad, allowing a reasonable degree of character 'customisation'.

Further rules cover *equipment, encumberance* and *character development.*

Rule book 2- Adventuring- this one covers the basic mechanics of the game including *Success Rolls, Combat* and *Damage* followed by a useful essay on *Gamesmastering* and a very generalised section on *background.*

Success Rolls are made using 3D6 and comparing the result with the relevant skill or attribute score - roll less than or equal to your skill level and you succeed, roll over and you fail.

There are two levels of combat - Basic and Advanced. Basic combat involves a simple attack/defence contest with a damage roll for a successful hit. The Advanced system is much more involved, and is played out on a Hex map sheet and takes into account maneouvering, hit locations, critical hits and misses etc.

The **Scenario Book** contains a solo adventure and a group adventure, both of which are fantasy orientated. The solo adventure is an adequate introduction to the basic game mechanics whilst the group adventure involves a rather ordinary but reasonably detailed caravan trek for up to 6 players.

The rules overall are quite complex, but clearly explained and well organised, with ample cross references, notes and examples. They are however somewhat derivative, containing elements of other games such as **Champions**, **Tunnels & Trolls** and **Aftermath**. (To his credit the designer acknowledges the influences of previous systems).

My main criticism is that the rules are not complete, covering only character generation and fantasy/medieval combat; there are no rules for magic, superpowers, modern combat or science fiction. Presumably these items will be the subject of numerous rules supplements and 'expansion packs' - all at extra cost!

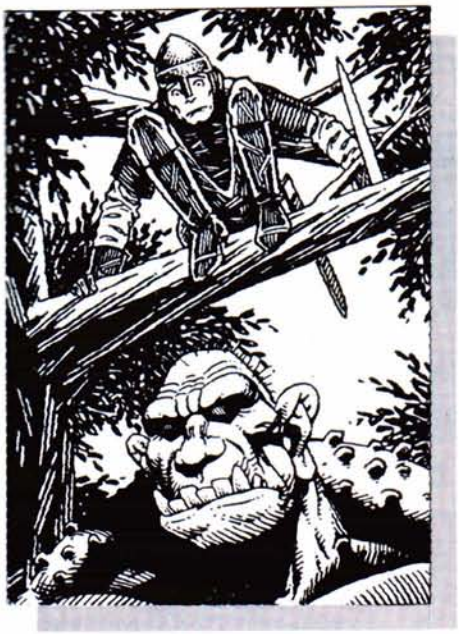
The game, as it stands, is also rather characterless due mainly to a lack of background detail; doubtless this will eventually be rectified by a succession of 'monster manuals' and 'campaign packs'. At a time when the more successful games (MERP, Cthulhu, Paranoia, Pendragon, etc) are rich in atmosphere or have some unusual theme, this lack of flavour could be a serious disadvantage.
Mike Willis

TROLLS OF THE MISTY MOUNTAINS (£3.95)

Published by I.C.E

Compared to 'Phantom", this is awful, boring, and hack. The three adventures consist of the two 'search and destroy' missions, one against trolls, the other against goblins and the search for a dead King's treasure.

The link with Tolkien's source material is flimsy, and the adventures are reminiscent of the old *Judges Guild*



modules. You would have thought that with all the rich background and the relatively high quality of the other 'ready-to-run' modules, that the thirty -two pages would have something half decent in them. This is not the case, if you cannot afford both 'Phantom' and 'Trolls', get the former and you will not be too disappointed.

Jon Sutherland

PLAYER CHARACTER RECORD SHEETS

by TSR for use with AD&D

Well, exciting eh? No, seriously I really wanted this to be a scenario, the cover art is so nice that it could have been great. It is, however, one of the new accessory packs. Character sheets are something which not everyone really wants to buy, but these are very nice, very nice indeed. Covering all of the possible permutations of the AD&D game system, they're compatible with Oriental Adventures and the Dungeoneers Survival Guide. Two Sheets are covered, a comprehensive character sheet and spell checkers - a ready reckoner for all kinds of magician. 17 character sheets are provided, ditto for the spell checkers. That is about £4.50 for 17 character sheets, no permission to photocopy is given, and that means over 26p a sheet for something that most people could replace with a sheet of A4....

That sort of price kind of kills the conversation, doesn't it? Well they are very nice sheets, and in presenting the full breadth of AD&D, they look pretty good. Then again, it costs a lot to have that many rule books, and most people have their own variants... How useful are they? The spell checkers certainly aren't; the print is too small, and their use not exactly proven. I'm afraid I'm going to have to give a thumbs down on this, Sorry guys.

Tom Zunder

CONQUEST OF SPACE (£9.95)

by Duncan Games

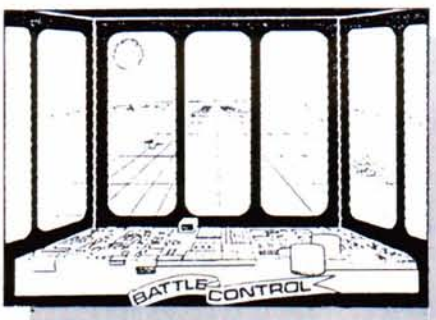
New small companies should be encouraged as much as possible; sadly I found this game, their first offering, rather disappointing.

'Conquest of Space' is a board game of interstellar conflict and intrigue, for 2 to 4 players, playable at two levels. The basic game is little more than a race game with a number of random events generated by a 'Hazard and Challenge' chart.

The advanced game is slightly more interesting as players can attack each other during their search for the 'mineral ores' required to power their 'Advanced Beam Weapons'. Unfortunately, since such attacks are instigated by the Hazard Chart, little tactical thought is required.

The game is recommended for players of 8 years and upwards and aimed at the junior end of the market. Unfortunately, it lacks the excitement to attract a younger person and the complexity to interest someone of my advanced years(?!).

Mike Willis



ONE-ON-ONE ADVENTURE BOOKS

For those of you hastily compiling your last-minute shopping lists, the recent wave of **Fighting Fantasy** books has come to a heady assault on the 2-player market-- Puffin's **Clash Of The Princes (£3.50)** is the latest title bearing the Jackson/Livingstone stamp. Illustrated by Workshop's John Blanche, each player has a book (be he warrior or warlock) and attempts to beat his opponent to succeed to the throne. Standard Fighting Fantasy stuff, the books can also be played solo, though where the challenge is then, I cannot say.

From the pen of hardened Fighting Fantasy authors *Mark Smith* and *Jamie Thomson*, **Armada Books** have published **Duel Master 1, Challenge Of The Magi** (two books), where both players take the part of "a powerful mage" competing to succeed as head of the Council in the Rainbow Land, each armed with his own colour of magic... A novel approach to the standard FF style, I feel. **Duel Master 2, Blood Valley**, should be out by the time you read this, this time one player takes the part of the **'Quarry'**, trying to find one of the three escape routes from the valley of **Gad**, and his opponent is the **'Hunter'**, assisted by three 'allies' whom he places at strategic points along the valley.

For those who like to see who they're hitting about the head, **Beaver Books** have recently turned to the proliferation of tabletop hero **Joe Dever**'s talents-- this time in the form of one-on-one graphic adventure books, **Combat Heroes (£2.25 each)**. In these, each location is illustrated, without text, and the player chooses his movement/tactical option from those listed at the bottom of the page. Turning to the relevant page, he may encounter his opponent (The White Warlord versus the Black Baron!) and engage in dice-less combat.

This system was pioneered by **NOVA** games, of course, and I understand that their **Lost Worlds** series of one-on-one books are undergoing considerable transformations, and will soon be printed here in the UK.

Whatever your taste for games, let's hope you enjoy your Christmas shopping!

D3
WELL, THE FESTIVE SEASON IS UPON US AGAIN.
YUP! I'M GOING TO GET A GOOD WEEK OF DEBAUCHERY IN, YESSIR.
THAT'S DISGUSTING! YOU'RE TURNING YULETIDE INTO A PAGAN RITE!
'TIS OTHERWISE! A PAGAN RITE HAS BEEN TURNED INTO XMAS!
PERSONALLY I'LL STICK WITH SATURNALIA!* ..IT'S LONGER AND IT GETS ALOT WILDER!

*Refers to the Roman Festival of wild revelry, not the P.B.M. game

BY IAN MARSH AND STE DILLON

MILL STONES

Dark things stir at England's far from satanic mill. **H2, The Mines of Bloodstone** are infested with strange -- and doubtless foul -- demonic creatures. Who can rid the mines of these terrors? Adventurers of levels 16-18, it seems, mere mortals who must thwart this terrible challenge and flex their newly gained knowledge from the Dungeoneers' Survival Guide.

N4, Treasure Hunt is for mere babes. This, the latest novice level adventure, takes a party of 1st. level adventurers around a haunted mansion. First level maybe, but not quite as easy as it might seem.

DA1, Blackmoor, is followed, unsurprisingly, by **DA2, Temple of the Frog**. Ribbet. Did you know -- and not a lot of people know this -- that Arneson's Blackmoor is connected to the current concept of the D&D universe? The link is a piffling 3,000 years -- Blackmoor is the ancient history of the world -- a fact only darkly hinted at in DA1. Clever adventurers will have already deduced this.

Hello,Hello. **M3, Twilight Calling**. The third Masters level adventure contains the struggle to obtain immortality. My hunch is that it will all turn sour, just like a Doctor Who story. Noble adventurers please enrol for the Struggle To Keep An Age-Old Terror From Menacing The Universe. Will someone persuade it to menace Milton Keynes instead?

SPACED OUT

Traveller 2300 is due out now. Surprise! It is a completely different game to Traveller. Well... it uses the Traveller rules set in a twilight world, and provides rudimentary equipment for exploring planets. The big battle seems to be against the environment, which should make a big change from the typical zap! pow! of the space opera and exploding Imperium agents.

PICK ME UPS

Games, the friendly Liverpudlian gamesters, are gathering plenty of the fall-out from stategically nuked Games Workshop licensing deals.

Look out for the FASA range, including **Battletech** and the Battletech novel.

Steve Jackson Games have also entered Games' lists, with the arrival of **Car Wars Expan- sion Sets 9 to 10, GURPS,** and **Toon** being imminent.

Still on fall-out, reports are that Task Force's **Delta Force** game is doing very well, as are the miniatures for **Twilight 2000**. I haven't seen them myself, but I would have thought a favourite would have been little globby remains of the human race. No, I don't like the game.

For maths graduates and physicists there's the **Rolemaster Companion**. And in January, look out for **Lords of Middle-earth**, ICE's compendium of the non-living legends of Tolkien's world:- Volume 1 contains *Elves, Valar, Maiar* and the *great enemies* of Middle Earth. Also watch out for **Robot Warriors**, a new robo-wars battle/rpg from I.C.E. Compatible with all Hero System games, it is designed by the highly creative Steve Perrin (of Runequest fame) and George MacDonald. In the role of the robot pilot, you get to customize your 'bot in terms of size, speed, weapons and armour. Now you can pilot a 75-ton robot in the comfort of your own home!

The **Complete Dungeonmaster** range -- Halls of the Dwarven Kings and its like -- also finds itself on Games' shelves and, undoubtedly, with far wider availability.

IT'S A CON!

Games conventions seem to have taken on a procreative surge at the moment-- informant Marcus Rowland has news of the 1987 UK SF convention, **BECCON '87**, to be held in Birmingham, where he is helping to organise the games room. Erupting with ideas himself, Marcus tells me he's after even more from Adventurer readers. The Beccon games room is to have a workshop panel on *Dungeon Design*, followed by a competition to design the best single dungeon room. A similar panel will be discussing scenario design in general, with a competition to create the most interesting 500-word scenario. More visually stimulating, they're planning a *"what happens if you meet an alien"* live action 'play'.

Guest of Honour at BECCON is SF author (and ex-editor of *Science Fiction* magazine) **Keith Roberts**, perhaps best known for his *Kiteworld* novel.

Held over the 17th-20th April, registration is presently £12, but it rises as the convention approaches. For more details, write to **BECCON, 191 The Heights, Northolt, MIDDX UB5 4BU**. Tell them you read it in Adventurer.

I also have news of **Miracle Con**, to be held in Harrogate on October 2-5th. 1987. Registration costs £15, and the convention's theme is Star Trek, the A-Team, "V", multi-interest, etc. For details write to **Donna Foster, "Disa Mariando", Laindon, Essex, SS15 6BU**.

If you're really into SF conventions, I suggest you get in touch with the Merseyside Science Fiction Media Group (MSFMG), who always seem to have something going on. Contact **Roy Evans, MSFMG, 77 Selby Road, Orrell Park, Liverpool, L9 8EB**. They have just held their first EVIL CON, which focussed on baddies in SF & films. Into guest speakers, fancy dress, displays, live action, etc., they also produce their own fanzine/newsletter.

FAIR DO

The new blue (or green, or even brown) eyed boy at TSR (UK) is Rik Rose. Mike Brunton's capacious chair and Macintosh are now Rik's, and so too is **Bohemian Ear Spoon**, TSR's newsletter. This eight-page document has a circulation of 2,000, and has been forced to move from photocopying to proper printing. And there are plans for giving this informative bundle of fun away in shops -- which is some good news for fans of TSR this month.

Rik, assistant to chief banana Sally Meadows, also revealed the somewhat ghastly prices for **Games Fair 1987**: £35 residential, £10.50 non-residential. Eeek! Games Fair takes place over 11-13 April at Reading University, and as yet there are no plans for a special guest.

Could this be due to **Lorraine Williams'** victory over **Gary Gygax** in the boardroom battle for TSR? Well, yes it could -- she is now president of TSR.

ROLLING HEADS

As Gary Gygax departs TSR (US), so too does Don Turnbull from TSR (UK). Staff at The Mill were rather reluctant to mention that Don had left the company at the end of September.

Don's departure is due to a difference of opinion with the new powers. "TSR is not TSR since Gary left," said Don, as I wrestled with 10 pence pieces in a phone box off the A3. "No one there understands the Dungeons & Dragons game."

Don and TSR have mutually agreed to part company. "I've left TSR having had seven successful years," he said, and I like to think we've always tried our best.

I, of course, am worried about the future; TSR has lost its European figurehead. The survival of TSR (UK) must now depend on the quality of support the company gives its products, and there is very little of the UK's creative team left to produce them.

Gary Gygax has been on severance pay from TSR since November 1985. His loss in the court room marks his permanent departure from the company he established. But he is still in the games business; Gary has set up his own new company, **New Infinities Inc**. His partners are Kim Mohan, ex-editor of the The Dragon, and Frank Mentzer, who revamped the D&D game. A new rolegame is expected soon.

As a marketing wheeze, gamers have the chance to send $15 to the company for a leaflet about the game, and then, when the game is published, they will get a special edition of the game. It's an interesting way of getting capital to say the least.

SHOOTING LINES

The hon prop of Grenadier UK, Doug Cowie, managed some passable impressions of a Dalek over the phone while relaying the latest news about Grenadier. Look out for more orcs; six packs are due out soon, all of them designed by Nick Lund. Nick, of course, produced the definitive orc when he ran Chronicle miniatures: now he is redefining the definitive. Good value at £1.50, the orcs come armed with a variety of weapons. The Orcish bolt thrower and crew should be very popular for Warhammer Battles.

From the **Masterpiece Edition** range come UK castings of a Mammoth, Death Dragon, War Chariot, and Death Giant, all at **£5.95** each.

WIZARD'S CHIPS

Warlock magazine is dead. "It was a sudden decision," said editor Marc Gascoigne, "but we had been looking at running down the magazine for some time. In the end it was either do Warlock or do some games that would make more money."

Suggestions that Warlock had been losing money were denied. Warlock did not cost that much money to produce, suggested Marc. "It just took up too much studio time."

Warlock will be sadly missed. It was often more lively and entertaining than its more pedestrian sister.

Here's a rather old photo of Marc, being lively and entertaining:

NEXT ISSUE:

Watch out for our **Religion and Cultures** special, with related scenarios, articles and cartoons, including religions for CoC player characters and a new RuneQuest cult. There's more for our Scatophagium campaign, more on Women In Role playing, cover art by **Robin Parry** and, of course, all the usual features. It is to be 4 pages less, however, thanks to the healthier ratio of articles to advert-isements.

NOTTS NUTS

Fans of **Thrud the Barbarian**, White Dwarf's contribution to gaming culture, should look out for the Thrud Special graphic novel. This will contain all the Thrud strips to date, plus some new adventures. Expect a large range of merchandise, including T-shirts and badges, but hopefully not LPs. *First Quest* was quite enough.

Green and Pleasant Land has overcome its production problems and should be out around mid-january. So too should the rooms set for **Dungeon Planners**. This contains 20 different dungeons rooms, including a torture chamber, a morgue, an armoury -- all the vital elements of a successful fantasy game.

For those of you who are unable to paint shield designs, Citadel's set of shield transfers should be a great boom. There will be several hundred in a pack, so fantasy wargamers and rolegamers alike should be kept satisfied. Also out from Citadel will be a special primer paint for metal figures. The end product is a little pongy but works well, according to Bryan Ansell.

GAMERS' ALLIANCE

I was recently sent the "Fall" issue of Gamers Alliance. You've probably guessed already that this is an American concern. They produce a quarterly journal containing game reviews (all types of 'quality' game, not just fantasy). On top of this, they offer a free international search service "...to help members track down that rare or elusive game..." This must operate rather like an **Adventurer** classified ad! I've no further details concerning membership costs, etc. but you can write direct to **H.M. Levy, Gamers Alliance, P.O. Box 197, East Meadow, N.Y. 11554 U.S.A.**

MURDER,MYSTERY,MAYFAIR

Not much room for Mayfair Games news this issue. But briefly: **Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine Game** exists- I have a copy. Why a boardgame about Ellery Queen has a Bogey double on the cover I don't know. The game resembles Consulting Detective in format but looks more practical to run with a group of players. Never mind the quality, feel the weight.

There is an addition to the **Role Aids** line in the form of **Undead**. What was once a thriving dwarf kingdom is now a land ruled by the evil lich Nightbay and his force of Undead. Thrilling stuff.

For DC Heroes comes **HIVE**, an adventure featuring the Teen Titans; **Dream Machine**, featuring the joker and, well, the Teen Titans again; and **Night in Gotham**, which does not.

PAINTING THE TOWN

On the subject of this tacky medium, latest news from Games of Liverpool's hotline is that Cliff Thornton, for 3 years their tele-sales man, has parted company and is now working for the people who produce Miniature Paints for Games - quite likely this will lead to a legal tangle of some sort over the ownership of copyright.

AND THERE'S MORE...

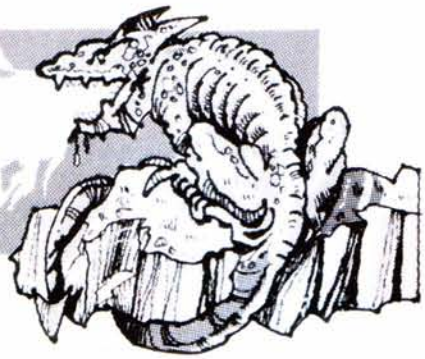
The Liverpool University War Games Society is holding a major independent convention on 4-5th. July 1987, with ample parking space and catering and bar facilities. Nuff said!

They're to have a figure wargaming competition, with awards provided by Games of Liverpool. There will also be role-playing competitions for D&D, CoC, RuneQuest et al. as well as board games and figure painting competitions, and a bout of Car Wars tournaments!

The results of **Adventurer**'s forth-coming readers' poll will be announced by his nobleness **Ste Dillon** (so far unseen in public, and rarely seen even by his secretary...), with equally noble awards.

Rounded off with panel discussions, talks and live-action displays, this one will be attempting to rival the other *big events* of the gaming year. Watch this space... Write to: Liverpool University War Games Society, c/o Guild of Under- graduates, 2 Bedford Street North, Liverpool.

FIGURES FRONT



By Martyn Tetlow & Mike Willis

FRONT LINE:

When the name **Prince August** is mentioned, most modellers instantly think of the ever popular range of 'cast your own army' moulds and accessories (something we will cover in detail in a later issue). Happily, more and more people are now also discovering the beautifully sculpted ready cast 25mm fantasy figures.

Prince August UK Ltd was set up in 1983 by **Mr Ross Windebank** to distribute the Prince August range of moulds through the retail trade in the UK. Both the moulds and the ready made figures are now manufactured in County Cork, Southern Ireland by a Swedish company headed by **Mr Lars Edman**, who has been producing Prince August for ten years. Over the past four years, the range has expanded greatly and with the introduction of the 'ready mades' section, now covers most figures which could reasonably be required for fantasy role playing and fantasy wargaming. The moulds are popular because they enable modellers to produce metal figures of adequate detail very cheaply.

In this article, the spotlight is on the ready made figures, all of which are designed by super-talented **Chris Tubb**, who has been working for Prince August full time for the past eight years. He began with a part time course in sculpting, mouldmaking etc. and then got the break he wanted by working part time for Prince August. Chris takes his designing very seriously, anatomy is all important to him. He points out that many fantasy character figures on the market today look alright at first glance, but if the layers of weapons, armour and clothing could be removed to reveal the naked (sorry- I know this is a family magazine) body underneath, then the figure could only be assumed to have suffered from some dreadful, disfiguring childhood disease, at the very least. Chris takes great care to get the form of the body correctly proportioned, poised etc. and the attention he gives to ensuring his characters are anatomically correct certainly seems to pay off. It isn't only the natural poise of the figure that makes them so appealing; all the detail is delicately sculptured and realistic, the faces in particular are full of character. I wounder if I am the only one who reckons the ranger **(CH14)** is *Lee Van Cleef*. Girls (- It 's not only blokes who read this mag is it?) I'm sure you'll be pleased to note that the female characters aren't all scantilly-clad beauty queens (and I'm equally sure that the fellas will be pleased to note that some of them are!). One good example of a female figure with plenty of character is the fighter **(CH10)**. She wears a leather and mail jerkin over trousers and boots and sports a punkish hair cut and an eye patch!

The figures available cover most of the common types of fantasy world adventurers and monsters, from *humans, elves, dwarves, halflings and leprechauns to goblins, ghouls, orcs, skeletons and wraiths*. Most of the range come individually blisterpacked, but some can also be found in boxed selections.

Larger moulds which include *dragons, a fire demon* and a *catapult with crew* come in very impressive boxes bearing the characteristic Prince August logo and a photograph of the model. A feature of the boxes I especially like is the protective sponge inside, which is in one thick slab hollowed out to suit each individual piece so that they can't rattle about and get damaged. Chris tells me that the ready-made models have received a very good response from buyers and he is at present working on expanding the range. If all goes according to plan, there should be thirty new items by January. All I can say is 'keep up the good work.'

Next Issue: Essex Miniatures, bold as brass...

BACK TO FRONT:

Johnathon Brinkley from **Derby** wrote asking what special effects can make a finished model or diorama look more professional.

Well, we've not got to the end of our painting section just yet but special techniques such as letraset or rub-down transfer lettering on shields and bases makes the model look very neat, as does using a very fine Rotring drawing pen to paint loose strands of hair, eyebrows etc.

To finish off a diorama, we can look to household items to inspire us, such as a small off-cut of bucher's cloth or netting material to use as spiders' webs. Bits of broken shell, pebbles and tufts of dried plants also add realism and quality.

Don't forget, if you have any problems with your painting, or queries with your modelling or even tips and hints that you might like to share with us, write to :-
'Back to Front', Adventurer, 85 Victoria Street, Liverpool. L16 DG

UP FRONT:

Leather:

An ink wash over an acrylic undercoat will give a semi-gloss finish very similar to polished leather. When painting straps and belts, apply the wash very carefully so that it just runs over the raised edges of the detail. You will find that this forms a dark 'shadow' line either side of the strap giving it more emphasis. Further highlights can be applied if desired using a lighter tone of the base colour. Here are some examples:- nut brown or peat brown ink over red, medium brown or grey undercoat, blue or green ink over medium blue or medium green undercoat, purple ink over violet undercoat.

Metal Ornaments:

These include items such as belt buckles, buttons, studs on leather armour etc. and are painted using the same method as for leather but using metallic undercoat and highlights (black for white metals, brown for yellow metals). As before allow the ink to run over the edges.

Claws:

For these I use an off-white undercoat followed by a wash of peat brown ink. In this case the ink tends to run off the sharp edges or point of the claw to form darker shading around the root. Highlights can be applied to the edges and point using slightly thinned white paint.

Dem Bones, Dem Bones...

For either single bones or whole skeletons, first undercoat the whole item in black (ink or acrylic) making sure you reach every crevice. Next lightly dry-brush with yellow ochre followed by several dry-brushing coats of white. The black and ochre undercoat tends to 'bleed' through the white top coat giving it an appropriately rancid look. Apply more white if you prefer 'fresher' looking bones or a thin wash of yellow ochre for 'old brown bones'.

Fur:

Fur is painted rather like hair using a dark wash of ink or acrylic paint over a lighter undercoat. Fur has a much coarser texture than most surfaces so highlights are best applied by dry-brushing with progressively lighter tones. Various shades of black or brown are the most suitable colours to use but for a change why not try painting on some stripes or spots similar to a tiger's or leopards.

Wood:

For polished wood a simple wash of brown ink will suffice; for a more 'grainy' finish dry-brush with a mix of medium brown and grey. To give a more bleached look, lighten the highlights until they're almost white.

PRINCE AUGUST

GT2 Storm Giant
Painted by Martyn Tetlow

Fire Elemental
Painted by Mike Willis

Air Elemental
Painted by Mike Willis

Female Fighter
by Martyn Tetlow

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Painted by Martyn Tetlow

Houri with Dagger
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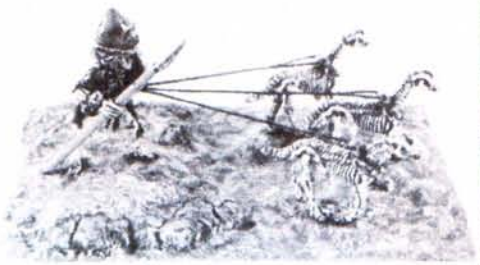

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Female Characters in a Fantasy Setting

by Janet Vialls

More Deadly than the Male

In gaming generally, female characters are frequently *underplayed*. (Here, and throughout the article, 'character' covers both PC and NPC: GMs should attempt to make their NPCs as alive as the PCs). Many game worlds seem to be distinctly short of women, or else they occur as barmaids, damsels in distress or harlots. In this, GMs are, perhaps, not entirely to blame. The literature on which much gaming is based frequently offers little else, falling into the same two categories: that which virtually ignores women (count the female characters in **Lord of the Rings**), or that which treats women as objects and victims (**Gor**, **Conan**, et al). There are now a few works that break this tradition, but scanning the *Fantasy/SF* shelves in *W.H.Smith* is still distinctly depressing. Even when the book contents are better than average, the covers are invariably covered with scantily clad and strangely mis-proportioned females. Were ALL fantasy artists bottle-fed? Perhaps someone ought to organise anatomy classes for the poor souls, so they can learn what shape the human body actually is! (Most figure designers could do with attending, as well). The women are also invariably depicted as captives or otherwise as victims. Taking the worst example, the sadistic nature of the "**Gor**" covers are revolting; try thinking yourself into the role of a woman shown on one. (Gor seems to form the backbone of Smith's fantasy section. I hope this doesn't truly reflect their popularity). Rare indeed is the book cover showing a believable woman as a person with power and personality, even where such exists between the covers. The message is clear. In fantasy, only the men count. It is a genre for and about adolescent boys of all ages. Given this, it is not surprising that gamers often seem to forget that half the population is female, or that these women have personalities, aims, and abilities, and can have an active role to play in the game.

One argument, which does need dealing with seriously, is that from those who profess a desire to run a 'realistic pseudo-medieval society' (whatever that is!), which 'naturally' prevents female characters playing an active role. Women's lives were severely restricted in the past, and to allow women characters to take on greater roles in games, they say, damages the game reality. These people seem not to realise that the very presence of magical, non-human races, and fantastic beasts, not to mention the usual pantheistic religious system, will all profoundly affect the nature of society. Any fantasy role-playing game is just that. Fantasy! This applies as much to **Chivalry & Sorcery** or **Dragon Warriors** as to **AD&D** or **Runequest**. All draw to a greater or lesser extent on mythologies, folklore etc., but any game that involves working magic is in no way a reconstruction of any period in the real past. In a gaming world, it is the internal consistency that matters, and a referee should not feel constrained to slavishly copy things that have existed.

Also, how many GMs would be equally eager to apply the restrictions such a society applies to its men? (Execution for a commoner caught riding a horse, for example? Or fines or imprisonment for not attending the Official Temple regularly enough?). A truly 'simulation-ist' approach would make adventuring a virtual impossibility. Life in a real medieval society was pretty dull, for the most part!

In my view a world which allows for active female as well as male characters invariably makes for a more satisfying, interesting game. If nothing else, it gives the GM more opportunities to create interesting and varied NPCs. Ignoring half the human (or dwarven, or elven, or even orcish) race clearly impoverishes any fantasy world, as does not using that half of the population to their full potential. A GM who only uses stereotypical females drawn from the pages of **Fritz Leiber** or **Jack Vance**, where the women are seen purely as objects, is really shortchanging her players. (If you still treat ALL your NPCs as objects or 'Monsters', have you thought of trying **Fighting Fantasy** instead?).

Let's have a look at a few types of women inhabiting reasonably conventional fantasy settings. These descriptions are intended to provide ideas for creating NPCs, as well as to help flesh out backgrounds for female PCs. The very problems for a woman in a traditional fantasy world can be used as an opportunity to create characters with a greater role-playing potential. As with any classification of this type, it is dangerous if used as a straightjacket, rather than as guidelines intended to spark ideas.

Many characters will fall into more than one category, whilst others remain totally undefinable.

1) The Matriarch.

This figure is common in literature, where she is usually seen as villainous. She is the leader of a large and powerful faction or family. She may be recognised as such or she may be the power behind the throne or the (male) titular leader. She is usually aged, and is always clever and scheming. She operates by manipulation and subtlety, often through her husband (if he is still alive), her children and grand-children. She is particularly effective in a campaign with a strong political or dynastic structure. (Pendragon, perhaps). Her **modus operandi** provides a way for an exceptional woman to be powerful in the most sexist society, for she operates through others. Without ever drawing a sword, or personally spilling another's blood, she is more deadly than any dragon. One of the best examples of this type is **Livia**, from **Robert Graves' "I, Claudius"**, who adds poisoning to the usual skills of such a woman. An interesting twist on the classic matriarch, which could create a scenario playing on players' innate sexism, is to have the matriarch as the 'good' character, whilst the noble warrior seeking the aid of the party against her is, in fact, the blackest of villains.

2) The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing.

This is the woman who appears to be the expected, helpless female. However, she is not what she seems, and if occasion demands, she becomes something totally other, whether this is the powerful warrior, or the arcane sorceress. Some members of this type may deliberately keep up a facade for some sinister reason, or simply for their own safety, whilst others may simply be happy, for the most part, to accept the mores of their society. An example of this latter type is **"Beauty"** from our own **"The Show Must Go On"** in **Adventurer #4**. **Thara**, in the same scenario, is an example of the first type (although she also has elements of the matriarch). Such characters are very well placed to take advantage of the sexist attitudes of those around them, and use those attitudes against them. A GM can use one of these to give a player an EXTREMELY nasty shock.

3) The Loner.

This woman lives outside society, and frequently outside the law. She prefers the lonely existence of the outcast to one where she is forced to conform to the normal female roles. Often, such a woman would find the life-style of the wolf in sheep's clothing irksome. She has no respect for the mores of the society she has left behind, and in return that society undoubtedly regards her with suspicion, and assumes that she is evil and 'un-natural'. The GM should not automatically share this prejudice. Living outside society does not automatically make someone evil. There may have been some specific incident that made her choose her life, or she may simply have been stifled by her society. Perhaps, for example, she has run away from an unwelcome marriage arranged by her parents. Either way, she has by some means or other gained enough power not to need society. Perhaps she stole a sorcerer's spell book; or maybe she disguised herself as a man for a time in order to gain training in arms.

Despite the name I've given her, she may be found with others (both sexes), who are perhaps exiles for different reasons. An obvious structure is for her to be one of a group of bandits, or perhaps leading a rebellion against an unjust ruler. Of course, saying that she lives outside society does not stop her appearing within cities or towns. Most thieves live outside society....

4) Priestesses and their ilk: Women in an Acceptable Career.

Many societies, especially those where frequent wars result in a shortage of men, offer acceptable alternatives to marriage for woman. Indeed, unless the society allows polygamy, such an alternative is a virtual necessity to provide something for the husbandless woman to do. For those GMs who insist on historical precedents for everything, remember that the growth of women's religious orders in the Middle Ages was largely due to this. Those women who did well in such careers could arrive at the position where they could exert power. Some Abbessess in the Middle Ages exerted considerable political power behind the scenes.

Some of these women might also become missionaries (now there's a background for a female adventurer!). In the context of a fantasy world, it is quite possible to imagine other careers being acceptable. Perhaps illusion -weaving is regarded as a 'feminine' form of magic, or sorcery in general may be regarded as acceptable. In a pantheistic world, female deities may well insist on priestesses rather than priests.

5) Women above social pressures or the law.

Some women may be in a social position which essentially puts them above social pressures, or even the law. Such a character might be the hereditary ruler of a state, or even simply the daughter of a high noble. She is in the position to ignore the mores of her society, yet is unlikely to be ostracised in the way the loner is because of her background and social position. Indeed, had she been low born she might well have been forced to leave society - her behaviour would be unacceptable in a commoner. Such a woman may have unusual skills or areas of knowledge. Or she could be a party's patron.

6) The Eccentric.

This is something of a catch-all group. This category includes women who by some means have their odd lifestyle accepted, at least to an extent. They wil always be exceptional women, with strong and independant personalities. She may have some skill that makes her valuable to her community (the village wise woman, a heroine who played a major role in averting a danger to her community, etc.), or she may simply be regarded as harmless. Her position may be a little unstable, however, as she is likely to take the blame for local disasters. Anyone who breaks the rules of society is going to be regarded with suspicion. Proving the innocence of one such could provide the basis for a scenario. Assuming, of course, that she is innocent...

Another sub-section of this group is foreign women. Locals shake their heads, and confide,

"Everyone knows foreigners are 'peculiar', and you can only expect them to behave oddly. Mind you I wonder what she's up to... It's not natural, the way she carries on."

Again, such a woman is going to be regarded with suspicion, especially if she comes from a very different culture (a matriarchy, perhaps?).

In general, when designing characters for a scenario, keep an open mind over the sex of a person. Gender will affect the personality of a character, as well as affecting other people's reaction to her. Using a woman rather than a man will often produce a more interesting personality or situation, with greater role playing possibilities. For example, a warrior woman will not be just a male warrior with curves; she will have a subtly different outlook. Consider her attitude to those who fulfil the traditional role expected of them (does she try to emancipate them, or merely despise them?). How do other women react to her? Frequently the other woman will be such a woman's sternest critics. What about her attitude to men (does she strive to emulate or surpass them? Or does she consider herself above them?). Does she, despite her warrior profession, care about and for children as a woman is expected to, or does she consider that she has escaped that burden?

If she lives in or comes from a reasonably conventional society, explaining how she came to be in her current position is far more likely to produce an interesting character than a man, whose path to such a profession was more straightforward. Frequently, women are skilled in the subtler arts. This subtlety can be far more effective than the 'male virtues' of brute force and ignorance. As an example, imagine a contest between Conan and Griselda (of RQ fame).

Also introducing active female characters introduces more possibilities for a variety of sub-plots, as well as giving interesting twists to standard major plots. Consider the barmaid of a roadhouse. Everyone knows she is a 'pretty young thing' who serves behind the bar and is an attractive ornament. What may not be realised is that she is running a major ring of highwaymen; from her job in the roadhouse she can learn when the richest caravans are crossing the wilds...

In my experience, as both player and GM, anything that can provide spring -boards for new and interesting scenarios is welcome.

If any male players out there are still unconvinced that the standard stereotypes are inadequate, just exercise your role-playing abilities and imagine trying to role-play a woman who is one of the stereotypes found in some of the popular books. Then go back to your game and think about the women within your world. Making them real people will add immensely to the game. Better still, find a female player or two!

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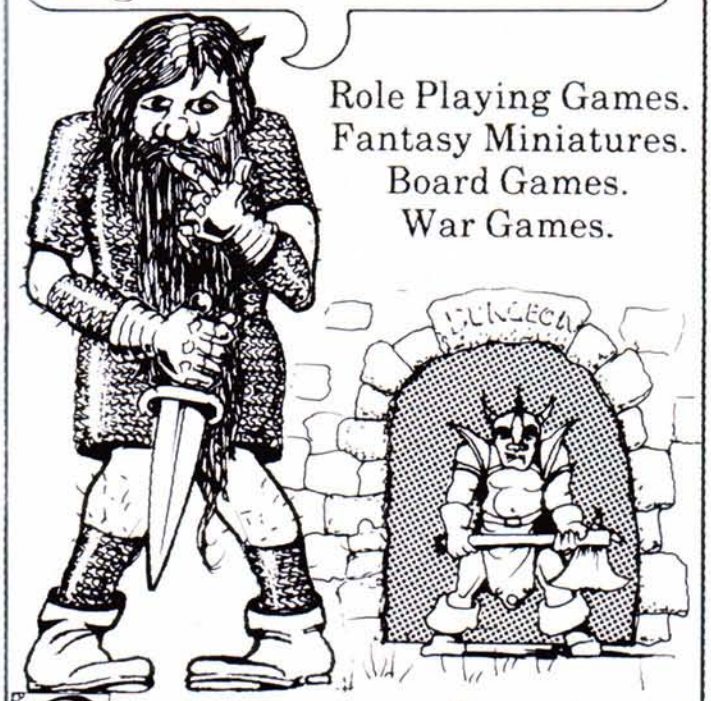

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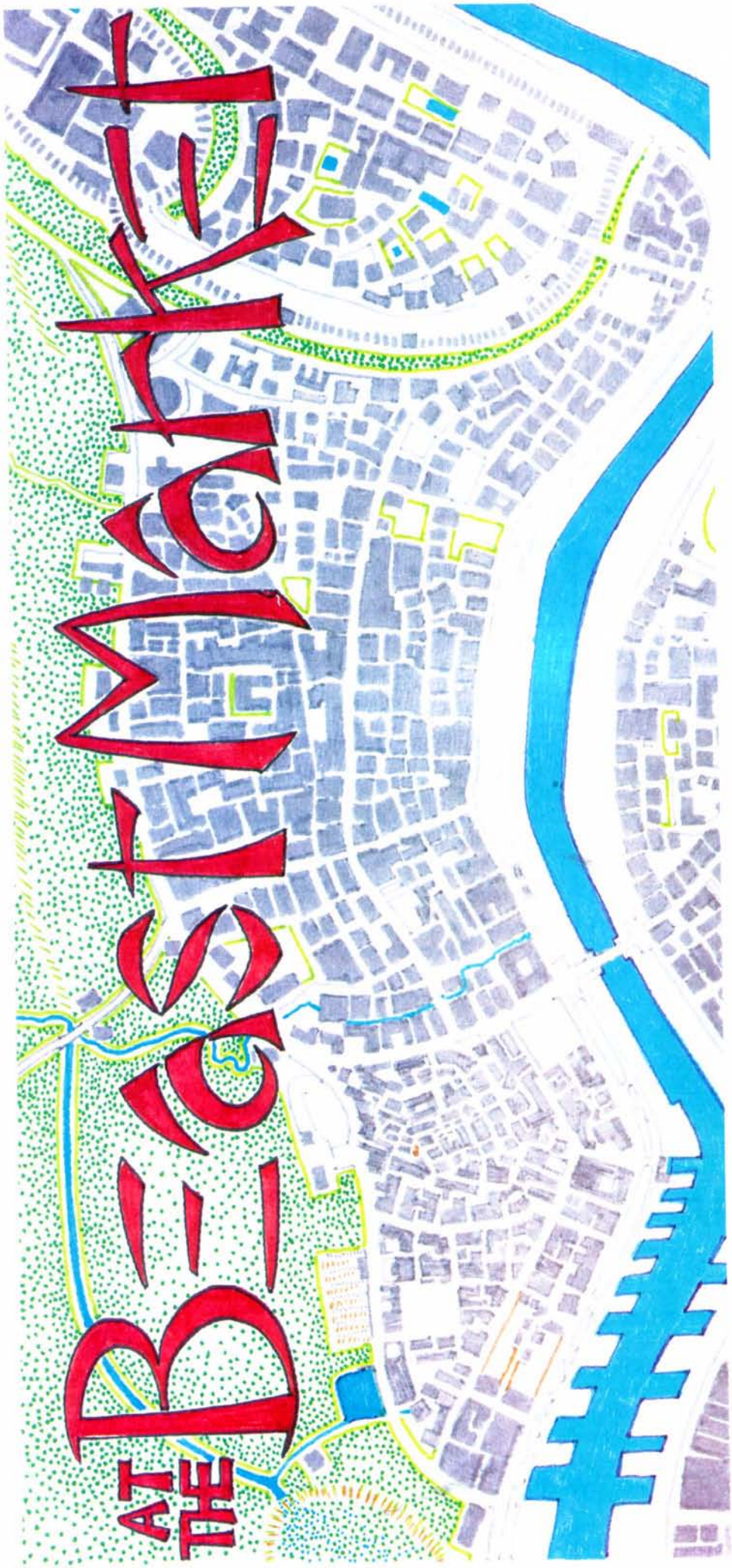


by Robin Parry

Introduction

During this festive time of year, adventurers' thoughts turn from dark damp dungeons and endless treasure hoarding. We turn our attentions, instead, to the warmth of a homely fireside, the laughter of children and the merriment of Christmas.

This is our opportunity to give you a look at the winter's fair of Scatophaguim, where GM'S of any fantasy game can present their players with a colourful backdrop for many encounters, happenings and events. Encourage the players to interact with glamorous personalities, to react to the confidence trickster and the practical joker; in effect, to role-play as it should be done... in true Adventurer style.

Winter Fair at the Beast Market

This introductory adventure in **Scatophagium** involves events occuring in and around the **Beast Market** during the Winter fair. This last fair of the year is held at the onset of the festive season which begins on the last full moon of the year and extends until the first full moon of the new year. For the poorer farmers and residents, it is a welcome chance to earn a few extra coins before winter reallly sets in. Poultry and game are sold along with dairy products, preserved fish and meat. Craftsmen and merchants also hire pitches in the Beast Market, offering clothes, leather goods, arms, charms, imported goods etc. There is also a livestock salesyard.

The stalls are set up on pitches rented by the day from the market overseer. A single pitch measures $7^1/_2$' X 5' and some traders rent double, treble and even quadruple pitches depending on the scale of their stock. The stalls vary from a grubby cloth spread upon the ground on which an intinerant trader arranges his meagre wares (Such as bunches of herbs and wild roots or hand crafted wood and bone) to multi-tiered counters with awnings where jewellery, medicines, tools and such articles can be bought.

New characters may equip themselves at the fair where salesmen have more competition than usual, therefore prices are keener and a greater range of goods is on offer. In Scatophagium, few things are available thoughout the year; there are shortages and dearths, and of course, compensating gluts, usually of turnips.

The town is known as a centre of horsetrading, and in the last fifty years or so has acquired a name for fine leatherwork, saddlery and the like. Horses are chiefly sold at the Horse fair, held in late summer when herdsmen and gauchos bring large numbers of fine yearling colts from the plains of the east, and ponies from the higher ground. By far the best animals are the tall horses bred by nomad tribes who travel those eastern plains. They bring small numbers of these dark beasts to the fairs of the town where they need not peddle their stock, they need merely await the best offer from the buyers who recklessly outbid each other for the fine animals known as **cannons** and **darkstock**. A small number of

these creatures are awaiting sale at the large stable among the Horsetrader's buildings.

It is suggested that players arrive during the fair and that the majority of shops in the town are closed as their staff and customers are at the fair buying or selling. Many inns and hostelries are full to capacity for the five days of the fair. The characters may overhear that they might possibly find lodgings at **The Bull's Cow**. The vacancies may seem strange for an inn abutting the market square, but this may be explained by the evil reputation earned by the establishment in the last few years (since the present landlord, **Broth**, has held the tennancy). Market traders may visit the place in order to drink and meet, but will not stay there as they believe their stock and purse (even their life) insecure.

In this low risk, low reward entertainment, the referee can prepare any or all of the encounters/events and run them either as they read or in a prepared sequence. The systemless format allows the scenario to be scaled up or down according to party size and strength.

The Beast Market

The square is surrounded by bulidings for the most part with two stories, the exceptions being the **Temple of Chessum** to the north east, and the **Butchers Guild** building to the west, both of which have three stories. The horsetrader's **stables** which open onto the square is single-storied, as are the **forge** and the **Market Tythehouse**, which controls the entry of livestock to the square. Other buildings are houses or shops with living quarters above.

For the convenience of the herdsmen and butchers, the square is divided up on the east side by stout wickets and pailings forming pens which, on occassions, hold the animals for sale.

The **Market Pile** is a monument in the center of the square. It is a pillar ten feet in height standing upon a large low dais. The pile is a designated crying point, where heralds and criers make their proclamations. Debts may also be settled at the pile.

Partly frozen mud and refuse cover the cobbled surface of the beast market. The light is not good but lanterns with coloured glass brighten the scene and the air is alive with music and tradesmen's shouts and the mingled smells of hot food, humans and horses.

Encounters / Events

1) **Thievery**. The fair presents ample opportunity for the enterprising footpad to augment his purse. The characters themselves may wish to indulge in this activity. Possible consequences are enthusiastic hue and cry and /or summary justice administered by the Guild militia patrolling the market (see 6). Escape and pursuit will be hampered by the crowd and clutter.

Otherwise there are a number of thieves and pickpockets at work in the square, the best organised of these being a band of four led by **Rogan** (able dip with possible magical aid) who with **Papa** (demi-human cutthroat) will run a distraction-extraction routine on their mark while **Japat** and **Masala** (two lesser thieves) will operate as lookouts, bagmen and rearguard. All four are members of **STUMP** (Scatophagium Thieves Union of Mutual Protection) and are based at the **Bull's Cow**. They or others like them will be active particularly where there are distractions and commotion.

2) **Fights**. These can be the witnessing or participation in a drunken brawl (see11) or something more involved such as a challenge issued by a professional combatant or amateur gladiator. One of the largest beast pens (I) has been set aside for the settling of disputes, duels and privately arranged tests of strengh. Bets are laid between individuals, but organised bookmaking is mainly confined to another large pen (H).

Players could be challenged to defeat the champion of the last seven bouts for a small but tempting purse, or one of obvious physical prowess might be invited to take a dive for a share of the money made from backing an unlikely contender. The approach is made by 'manager' **Ravel**, and his suitably unlikely contender is the one legged blind **Orf**.

Camon Luft is a journeyman butcher, powerful of physique and an admirable wrestler. **Goffry** and **Munt** are professional fighters competent with most common weapons, who will fight on an equal stakes basis with any reasonable opponent. Drinks offered to participants between rounds may very well be spiked. Defunct contestants are simply slung over the barrier into area (K).

3) **Accosted**. An old crone gesticulates and mumbles while staring with rheumy eyes, or a sudden shriek makes heads turn to see a figure gibbering and droning, waving fingers and making passes with a hank of hair, a sword, or a posy. Players can be accosted by an emaciated youth, a dishevelled man, a woman covered in green powder or even a masked dwarf, who may variously be in a state of religious ecstasy, having a fit or part of a play. Their antics may well appear threatening.

4) **Swordsman.** A beefy armoured figure hefting a large sword emerges abruptly from a booth. If not pre-empted, he will swing the sword three times, nod in approval and re-enter the booth to bargain.

5) **Vendors**. Fast food is sold by vendors from barrows or braziers where many stop to warm their hands. The delicacies on offer are squander (candied cuttlefish), yoff (baked and flaked nobnuts), and frupputty (fermented pea pulp with raisins).

6) **Guild Militia**. Professional fighters hired by the guilds to maintain order and defend the interests of their employers. Each guild with an interest in the fair will have contributed to the force. A typical band of six will have two members from the butcher's militia, two from the horse traders', one from the merchants' and one from the smiths'. These are not military men but glorified bullies who administer on the spot punishments for theft. A sound beating if property is recovered, dismemberment if it is not.

7) **Musicians**. A wild and exotic band thrashing hand drums and small harps, blowing all manner of horns and pipes wheels around the square (possibly in celebration of 15). Alternatively a foppish youth sings melancholy ballards with lute accompaniment. Players may be encircled by the band and encouraged to participate to their embarrassment.

8) **Thespians**. A bizarre crew of outlandishly costumed pople bellow lines at each other and move with exaggerated gestures. A staged death can get particularly out of hand with the supposed victim staggering around for several minutes, frequently some distance from the action. There is a temporary stage set up in the corner of area (J), where the troupe of **Prospero the Vast** are performing, but if business is slack they will perform impromptu anywhere the crowds are. Prospero's troupe consists of himself, his wife **Organza**, his plain but talented daughter **Verity**, two rival leading men, a buffoon and three bit-part players-cum-seamstresses and scenery shifters.

9) **Tumblers** . A band of inept acrobats has manged to infiltrate the fair despite having been banned the previous year from ever performing there again. The trouble is they've been banned from everywhere else. This enthusiastic but clumsy trio will juggle, balance and tumble to the misfortune of all in the vicinity until chased away by the militia, tradesmen or clients.

10) **Beggers**. Several pitiful mendicants have evaded the militia in order to beg at the fair. Not all of them merely whine and tug at sleeves; a particularly scabby chap will threaten to bleed on his victims and thereby disease them if his demand for funds is not met.

11) **Drunks**. Quite a few people at the fair are in an advanced state of intoxication, but generally cause no trouble other than eventually collapsing and being carried off to (K), where folks incapacitated through drink or death are deposited. However, a band of six or more apprentice witches lubricated with copious quantities of *distilled thornapple* wine may well present a problem to any young person unfortunate enough to appear competitive or attractive to them.

12) **Employer**. Domestic servants are traditionally hired at the winter fair, and characters standing around with no apparent purpose may be approached with an offer of employment as a gardener or scullery maid for a pitiful wage. At any rate, characters should be eventually

deemed unsuitable after a look at calves and teeth, or the discovery of a lump of dishonesty on their cranium. (for *phrenology* see 18).

13) **Sideshows**. Grotesque puppet shows amuse and captivate people of all ages, depicting ancient legends and whimsical tales such as *Potato Palace* and the *Imaginary King* and the *Dog's Fugue.*

Games of skill such as *find the lady* (three card trick), *draughts* and *backgammon* can be played for money.

14) **Lottery**. A number of lotteries operate, mostly corrupt, where the winning number belongs to a friend of the proprieter, or he absconds before anyone has a chance to claim the prize. The outcome of a straight lottery can be determined by dice rolls, 50 to 70 percent of total money for tickets awarded as prize.

15) **Wedding Party**. In area (J) a band of fifteen gypsies are celebrating a wedding. They have set up a temporary camp and music; dancing and drunkeness abounds. They are a generous, indulgent and fiery people who speak only their own tongue. They will encourage characters to join in the celebrations where food and drink (a deceptively potent brew which tastes like spicy lemon juice) will be genially forced on the newcomers. The revels will go on into the night providing ample opportunity for a character to become acquanted with a gypsy of the opposite sex wearing a scarf tied around their left arm. All of the younger members of the band are wearing such. Accepting a gift, even a morsel of food or wine, from a scarf wearer constitutes marriage at this time, although this may not become clear for a while.

16) **Salesman/Auctioneer**.Auctions of various goods are conducted from the pile (G). Players may discover a salesman rounding up an audience with his platter;

"Gaffers and matrons, brides and blades, giglets and squads, circumscribe me. May it delight you and enrich your lives to magnify and enhance yourselves with the fruits of antique, yet recondite knowledge recently unearthed in the distant ruins of inaccessible Argumenton, the one time demesne of the sage inquisitors, wrestled from the grasp of dread guardians left there by those fell folk so thirsty and covetous of knowledge that thousands of years after their passing it must be won with daring and bloodshed. Eventually brought to you, here, at this very place, at this very point in time! For I am offering this one chance to sample the legendary elixir of diuturnity, the fabled posset of longevity to add to your years and bolster your health. Even the abiding races may benefit from this augmentor of age Anyone can use a few more years can't they? Now I have a very limited stock and it must be first come, first served!"

At this point, several eager buyers will step up clamouring for the small vials that the salesman now produces and readily paying the asked price, will scuttle off with their prizes. Of course the elixir is bogus and the first buyers are ringers, but who can prove the brew ineffectual?

Otherwise an auction of magical items may be in progress; a ring with a magical aura about it, a glowing sword, a map,a magically locked chest sold as pot luck, books of unintelligible script, a crystal ball with images within. These too are bogus and the images within the crystal ball move about but never change.

The salesman is one **Boarhanger**, an itinerant minor mystic adept at disappearance.

17) **Escaped Beasts**. The crowd ahead parts suddenly to allow a large hairy anthropoid form to hurry forward. This menacing ape-like creature will rush directly towards the characters with arms outstretched. The animal will be either a tame performing creature panicked by unruly children, or a truly dangerous beast brought to the fair for sale and insecurely restrained. In the former case the handler, **Vasco**, will shortly appear in pursuit, apologetic for any harm caused but deeply unhappy if the beast is killed. In the latter case, any owner will be difficult to trace but is in fact **Bazza**, an argumentative fighter residing at the **Bull's Cow** and a confederate of **Rogan** (see 1). He will have negligently left the animal in one of the vacant pens while he went off to the inn. Witnesses may verify this.

18) **Fortune Telling**. Several boothes offer clairvoyant services in area (J). One tent has a notice proclaiming '*The Oracle Yoni. Unsurpassed seer of Scatophagium, skilled in the reading of cards, bile and dice.*' After paying her fee, the small wizened woman will make much show of preparatory procedures, shuffling or laying out of equipment and geometrically patterned cloth, but whatever method is picked, there will be only one of a few set fortunes dispensed;

1) *"You have seen much tragedy in your life and there is more to come! Beware the sign of the inverted hand, it will bring misery."*

2) *" Great joy and wealth will be yours but only when you have crossed much water and taken council with your heart."*

3) *"The future is in your own hands to make or destroy as you choose. You have the power to reach the very pinnacle, but trust not the woman you meet there."*

Another tent displays a chart upon which is a drawing of a human head, the bald scalp of which is divided up into areas each marked with a symbol. Underneath is written '*Kallipur the phrenologist, Bumps felt.*' If his fee is paid, the tall and austere **Kallipur** will procede to knead the scalp of his sitting client for many minutes, mumbling and exclaiming, eventually delivering a gloomy resumé of the player's prospects such as

"I'm afraid your mould of hedonism will lead you into trouble and your occiput tends to gluttony, which will surely shorten your life."

The third tent, that of a palmist, is closed. *"Back in five minutes"* reads the note.

19) **Execution**. At some point during the day, between auctions and sales at the pile, a stack of timber lying alongside the barrier is ingeniously assembled into a makeshift gallows. Armed men and women have become apparant at all strategic points along the square. One mounts the pile and announces to the crowd

"Over the river, at any moment they will hang Myrtle, sister Myrtle she was to many of you. This is Vector's show of strength, to do it today and so we have decided to defy him with our own little show. Bring on Vector's man, Spasm."

While a hooded figure is dragged to the foot of the scaffold, the man on the pile continues;

"She has managed to get word out."

He pulls out a crumpled paper and reads

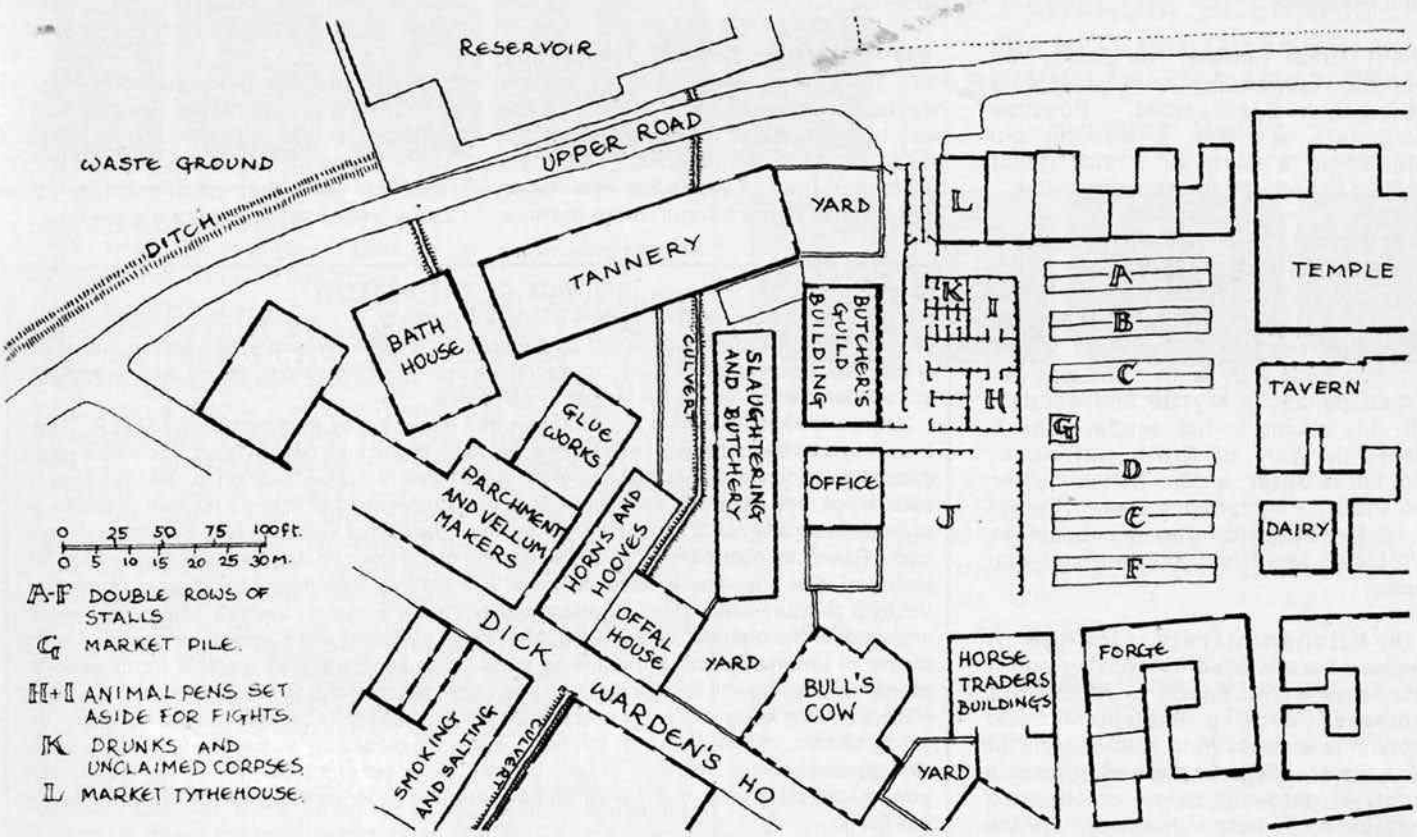
"She wishes well all who've helped her in the past. Any debts and oustanding business will be settled by Detric and Broth of the Bull's Cow."

The hooded figure is hoisted onto a heifer and a rope put in place. A shout from an upper story comes *"They've dropped her!"* and the crowd respond with *"Stretch him them!"* and the deed is done. The evidence is removed in short order, and the men and women melt into the crowd.

Myrtle was an unfrocked clergywoman turned outlaw, accomplished thief and trusted fence. She was well known in the town but due to frequent absences on her part, her imprisonment has remained secret until recently. **Spasm** was one of **Vector's** spies.

The referee may wish to have an I.O.U. signed *'Myrtle'* or similar document, come into the players' possession. This is probably best done before the execution and can be accomplished in a number of ways. It can simply be found on a corpse, picked from a pocket, or even purchased accidently from a second hand weapon stall where it is hidden in the lid of a fine case of darts that catches a player's eye. It is also possible that the players may receive the note as settlement of some kind, "this is the only thing of value I possess..." sort of thing.

20) **Bouts and Betting**. An animal pen (H) has been set aside for fights involving various opponents organised by bookmakers. The mud is maroon and scattered about are clumps of feathers and fur. The bouts may involve animals and /or humans. Some typical bouts are; (1) A *cock fight* between two fine birds, a brown and a white. The white bird is drugged and will fight with wild ferocity, hitting twice for the other bird's one hit. There is a chance that some of the numerous spectators will realise this and draw attention to it. The odds are 2:1 on the brown and even money on the white. (2) A *bare fist fight* between **Oban the Bald** and **Red Ennato**. The clever money is on Red. (3) *A dog fight*; one a



grotesque bulldog and the other (the green one) is in fact a savage barking toad from south **Enruika** with cleverly fashioned leather ears, nose and tail, attached with pine resin and tacks to horney nodules ornamenting the toad's hide. (4) *Wrestling maids*; the huge and gross muscle bound **Alegna** (even money) versus slight and lithe beautiful **Harowen** (five to one). (5) *Cat fight* involving huge stinky toms; one tabby with virtually no nose and one shaved and tattooed with potent arcane symbols.

THE BULLS COW INN

The inn is a squat building of mortared stone with a low pitched roof. Entry from the square is through a porch painted with the inn's sign.

GROUND FLOOR

1) **Porch**. On the far side of the door in to the common room sits an old, apparently blind begger who will extend a gnarled hand for alms. This end of the porch is gloomy even during daylight and the begger might not be noticed until her hand appears from the darkness. She does in fact operate a lever with her foot releasing the secret door behind her, when it is needed by a friend of the house fleeing pursuit. The lever also triggers a small chime in (18). The door is sprung and closes after use. A large heavy door secures the porch at midnight, otherwise it is open.

2) **Common Room**. A seedy place by any standards, little light is admitted by the small grimy windows and the interior is poorly lit by candle lanterns hung on the pillars. The ceiling is of low beams with planks above. The floor is made of stone covered by a good deal of mud and straw. A large fireplace stands near the door and a stock of peat is piled at the foot of the hearth to dry.

The crowded room is noisy and smelly. Any of the characters used in the encounters at the fair may be here with the exception of the wedding party. In addition, there will be a handful of market traders, a couple of slovenly trulls, a brace of brazen harlots and assorted drunks. Other characters may also be added, such as an irrascible shape changer and/or an over-reacting spell user. A balcony opens above the bar.

In the event of a brawl the tradesmen and girls will try to leave by the nearest available exit, probably blocking it. The footing is insecure at the best of times, but with a bit more ale and food upon it, it will be positively treacherous. The pillars are narrowly spaced and will cause problems, as could bodies falling from the balcony. There will be an intermittent hail of missiles including food and the contents of the hearth but the place is too damp to burn well.

3) **Bar.** Here will most likely be **Broth** the landlord. He is a scarred and burly character, jovial and disreputable with a deep passion for *anything* female. Close by will be his small but lethal companion **Mallas**.

A couple of potboys fetch drinks from the bar for the patrons. One, **Theo** serves the common room, and **Chad** serves the snug. (5) both sleep by the fireplace in the common room after closing.

Casks of wine and barrels of ale, small casks and bottles of spirits (notably brandy and vodka) and smaller barrels of strong ale are positioned around the bar. Some simple fare such as a round of cheese, several small loaves and some smoked fish along with the house's better drinking vessels are contained in a large cupboard at the foot of the stairs. A small concealed door leads to (6) under a deep shelf whereon stands bottles and mugs, etc.

A large wooden statue of an ogreish creature stands beside the stairs. It has an open mouth and is hollow down to about the waist, despite this it is extremely heavy. Broth tosses all but the smallest copper coins into it, and with the aid of those he trusts, empties it every night.

4) **Front Vestibule**. A small bar for the convenience of those in the snug, doors lead to both the common room and snug, and the front door gives access to **Dick Warden's** Ho. The door is barred and locked at midnight.

5) **Front Snug**. A cosy room with a fireplace wherein traders and their lady friends pass the evening.

6) **Concealed Room**. Almost anything or anybody might be found here; someone hiding out (conceivably even Myrtle, if the GM chooses to aid her escape) or it could simply be vacant. A spy hole in the ceiling is concealed between the beams.

FIRST FLOOR

7) **Balcony**. The landing is reached via stairs from the common room and gives access to guest rooms. The floors upstairs are wooden and the rafters visible above.

8) **The Emperor Suite**. These are the best guest rooms the inn can offer. Nevertheless they are poorly furnished

and dilapidated.

9-16) **Guest Rooms**. The grubby and decrepit rooms may contain guests and/or their possessions. Possible encounters are with a working girl entertaining a client or a sick guest confined to bed with the spouting blains.

17) **Residents Lounge**. Some guests will be eating and drinking at the tables. At the table by the balcony will be **Detric**, a gaunt, tall, quick-tempered lady with formidable weapon skills, currently living with Broth. She was the closest person to **Myrtle** and will deal with any claims to her estate. She is constantly wary of **Broth** flirtations. With her is **Unter**, a demi-human fighter and **Plato**, a fighter/spell user. The evil priest **Prootscam**, who has business with Detric and Broth, may well be with them.

18) **Kitchen/private lounge**. A fireplace here is used for cooking and a pot of stew warms beside it. A table has uncleaned cooking implements and cupboards contain food and flagons of clean water. Pegs in the wall support a variety of garments below which a rug conceals a spy-hole in the floor. On the wall by the door to the residents lounge hangs a metal tube with a clapper operated by a wire emerging from the wall.

19) **Mallas and Unter's Room**. Dirty rags adorn the floor and various articles of clothing are strewn over the furniture. A chest contains Mallas' possessions, mostly killing implements, amongst which is a small wax sealed box containing lively poisonous spiders.

20) **Plato's Room**. The Paraphenalia of a mage litters the room; charts and ingredients, a pestle and mortar, balances etc.

21) **Broth and Detric's Room**. The inn's finest bed, with its high carved headboard and solid base is in here. The base has concealed drawers wherein the pair's valuables are secreted. There is a fireplace in front of which are two chairs. There will be some armour in the room, a suit of mail and a fine helmet, several silver ingots are hidden up the chimney.

NOTES. Myrtle's possessions will be in Detric's care and could include cash, jewellery, scrolls, even a darkstock mare. There are no stables at the Bull's Cow, but residents keep their horses in the horse trader's yard to the east of the inn.

BERWICK OF THE BATTERY

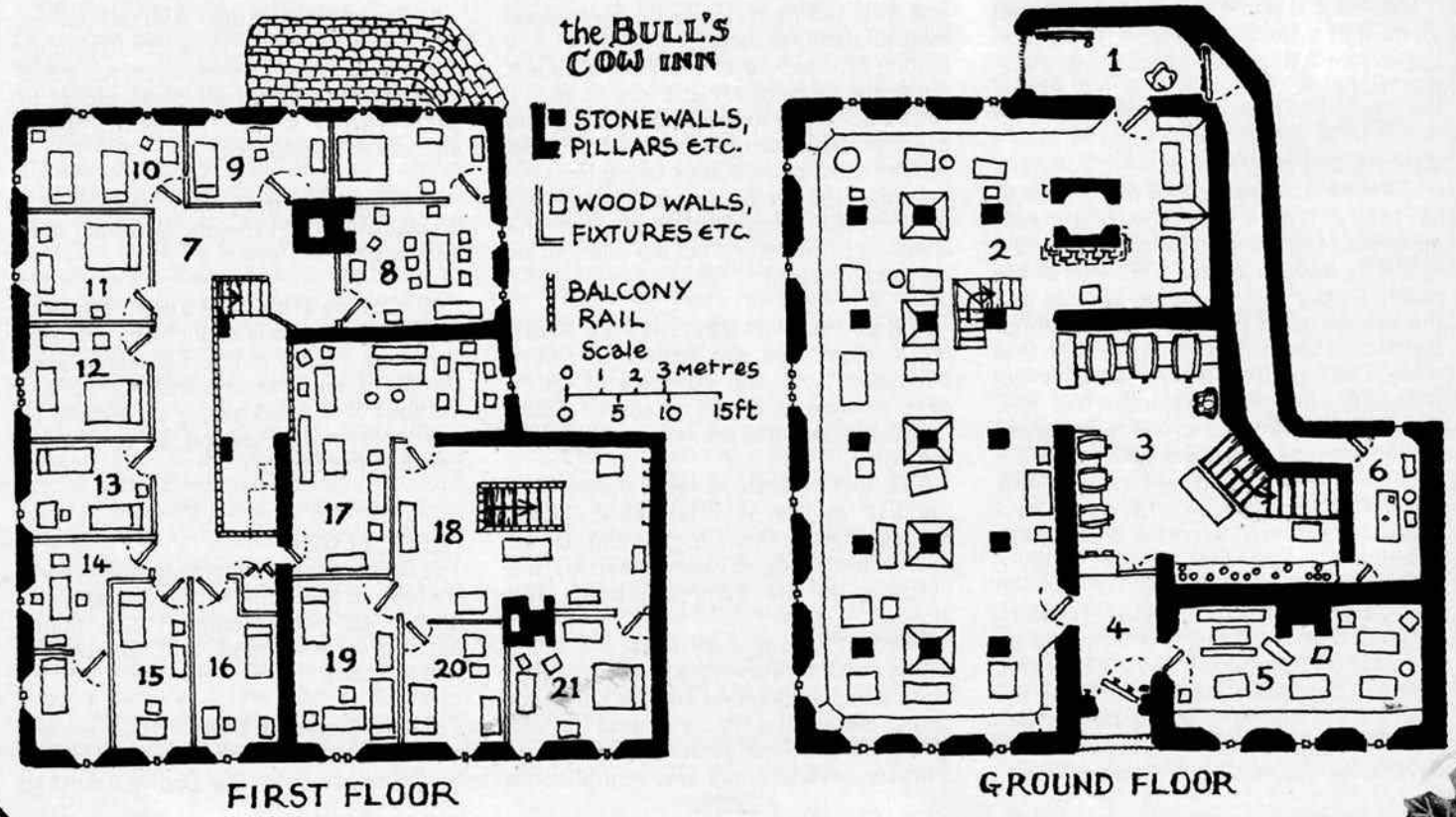
If a PC presents a claim to Myrtle's goods and property, or if present while some other does, then the GM could dash their hopes by the appearance of a tall rangily built person attired in a bottle green cloak and a peaked cap, sporting a prominent moustache. Barely audible whispers in a sudden silence names the stranger as **Berwick**.

Berwick is Myrtle's brother and is known and respected by members of *S.T.U.M.P.* The thieves and bullies of the west end believe him to be one of their own at heart, and only a soldier through coincidence. The inhabitants of the walled area of Scat who deign to take an interest in such things, see Berwick's frequent visits to the scummy end of town as his own pecadillo, or perhaps as an attempt at information-gathering on the part of Vector. In fact, Berwick is his own man. Raised by poor parents on the south side of the river, he and his sister Myrtle were left orphaned after a boating accident drowned their parents; their freight barge was rammed by Vector's pleasure craft. Denying responsibility for the accident, Vector's pilot nevertheless arranged for the orphans' safekeeping; Myrtle was educated and trained as a priestess in the temple of **Imeprath**, and Berwick was taken on at the Battery as a stable boy/dogsbody, eventually entering into service and rising rapidly to the rank of Captain. Trusted by his superior officers and the lower ranks, the only people with any animosity towards him are his peers, the young officers, chiefly from rich families, whom he repeatedly surpasses in weapon skills, strategy and bravado. He tries to keep his rebel sister out of trouble, helping her out of many scrapes and close calls, many of which have become underworld legends, such as the bogus Tax Barge.

If Myrtle has been executed and he has ultimately been unable to save her, he will be in an intense emotional state. Obviously, it would be dangerous to pester him regarding his sister or her property. If, however, he has managed to free Myrtle from the gallows, he will be disgusted at the avarice of her 'friends' in their keenness to divide the spoils. He will endeavour to keep her survival secret from all but **Detric** and perhaps **Broth.**

He will wear little armour, depending on wits, speed and the Gods' grace for protection: his ability to avoid harm often transcends normal luck, without obvious charms or amulets. He fears failure and abandonment, with an intense devotion to his sister.

Statistics: Strength and Size (above average). Intelligence, Dexterity and Native cunning (exceptional). Charisma and/or Power (high).
Combat skills: Sabre, Rapier, Javelin and light Crossbow (All highly developed).
Skills: Riding (excellent). Climbing, Disguise, Hiding, etc. (proficient). Thaumaturgy (novice).
Equipment: Plentiful, of the highest quality. Includes his horse, tied near the Inn.



SLIME TIME

A PARANOIA SCENARIO OF RED OR ORANGE SECURITY CLEARANCE

by Alex Bardy

GM'S BACKGROUND

The true state of affairs in **GST** sector is somewhat more complex than it may at first appear.

The original group, under the leadership of **ZEE-Y-ARC-5**, were each the target of a personal vendetta. For reasons unknown, **TEKE-O-CZD-1** got in contact with her High Programmer and *somehow* managed to persuade him to send **ZEE-Y** on a suicide mission. Through his own means and method the High Programmer managed to concoct *The White Box* plot. Through modification of The Computer (using both *Computer Security* and *Computer Programming* skills), the High Programmer has made it believe that The Box is an advanced experimental monitoring device. The computer, in its infinite wisdom, sent the group to the abandoned GST sector in order to test the new equipment.

Through an 'accident' (ie. taking a laser cutting tool to The White Box), ZEE-Y discovered what was in The White Box (nothing whatsoever!) and immediately realised he'd been duped and taken for a fool. Far from being one of the most advanced pieces of equipment ever produced in Alpha Complex, The White Box was simply an empty box made of a white metal! Understandably, ZEE-Y was no longer a happy citizen, and far from being used as reactor shielding, promptly dispatched his group of ORANGE clearance troubleshooters before their ignorance led them to believe he was a dirty Commie traitor! Vowing revenge ZEE-Y set up home in GST sector, determined to live out his life for the good of the **Death Leopard** society...

In the ensuing period of time, ZEE-Y has used his array of engineering skills to the full, creating a veritable playground in which he has all manner of little toys at his fingertips!

Who better to venture into the playground than a brave band of intrepid Troubleshooters eager to serve The Computer?

```
: MISSION ALERT!!

: GREETINGS TROUBLESHOOTERS! YOU HAVE BEEN
  ACTIVATED TO SERVE THE COMPUTER!
  AT LAST, YOUR LENGTHY PERIOD OF INACTION
  HAS COME TO AN END!

: GST SECTOR HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF SLIGHT
  INCONVENIENCE FOR SOME TIME. YOU ARE
  REQUIRED TO MAKE A ROUTINE FOLLOW-UP
  MISSION TO DISCOVER THE LOCALE AND STATUS
  OF AN OVERDUE GROUP OF TROUBLESHOOTERS.
  YOUR MOST IMPORTANT DUTY IS TO RECOVER THE
  WHITE BOX. IN ADDITION, YOU ARE REQUIRED
  TO SUPPLY A REPORT ON THE CURRENT STATUS
  OF THE SECTOR.

: REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO SECTOR NTY FOR YOUR
  ROUTINE MISSION BRIEFING.
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INTRODUCTION:

This is an introductory adventure for Paranoia; GMs should understand the basic rules of the game, but will be gently helped by The Computer in the Games mastering of the adventure. Players should be new to the game and have ready rolled characters (or use the ones from our other Paranoia scenario, Christmas Cheer).

THE MISSION BRIEFING

Upon entering NTY sector and approaching the Briefing Room, the players will come across a strange, well-spoken woman who will promptly introduce herself as **TINA-B** and notify the players that she'll be leading the briefing. She'll also warn them of her boredom when asked too many questions, and casually mention that she would waste no time in terminating the characters if they bore her, and that because such are the advantages of high security clearance, she needn't worry about recrimination. A nice lady.

TINA-B is very conscious of her status and has a tendancy to continually remind those of a lower security clearance. This will show in anything she does, including the forthcoming briefing... Entering the Briefing Room the characters will be introduced to two others. The first will introduce himself as **DAVID-B** in a very nonchalant manner, giving the characters the very distinct (and accurate) impression that he'd rather be elsewhere. The second person will introduce himself as **JOHN-G** and though seemingly in no way agitated with the troubleshooters will nevertheless say as little as possible, speaking only when spoken to and consis -tently referring to a small note pad which he seems to carry everywhere with him. Throughout the briefing JOHN-G will be very attentive to all within the room, obser ving all moves and mannerisms and every so often making a few notes in his pad.

Once all introductions, etc. have been completed, the three 'officials' will seat themselves and TINA-B will give them a rundown of the mission - their aims and objectives and a constant reminder not only of her status but of their loyalties to The Computer and the citizens of Alpha Complex.

All the while of course JOHN-G is scribbling down notes and DAVID-B is looking thoroughly bored.

Throughout this briefing, GMs must attempt to emphasize the strict security involved. Those guards for example; their weapons seem rather exotic for a 'routine' mission briefing, and why are there so many of them?

The briefing should go something like this...

"Welcome Troubleshooters. I'm pretty certain you are all eager to serve the Computer. In fact I know you all are, and am pleased to offer you the opportunity.

The Computer realises that your experience is little and has therefore selected a most routine mission for you to perform. You will not be provided with additional Troubleshooters that could perhaps hinder your mission, for the Computer has observed your frequently successful missions of time long gone *(if the group haven't done well before, or even if they've never met before, an interruption at this stage could cause slight disappointment to the three officials and The Computer; I trust GM'S can be relied upon to make it show...?)*

However, we do require a leader *(this'll be the Troubleshooter with the highest security clearance or picked at random)* which will of course be ..... naturally.

Now then, this mission will take you to GST sector which was of course abandoned in ...what year?

(It is only right that the players don't know the year but encourage them to guess anyway!)

Perhaps you'd like to tell me what you are required to do in the sector?

(At this point, if the players say exactly

what they've been given in the MISSION ALERT they will be told that is all they need know and promptly pay a visit to Research & Development. If not they will be corrected (and of course, reprimanded) on their utter ignorance, and then pay a visit to R&D, which have got all the weapons/equipment (/problems) they will require, in addition to their own personal equipment).

VISIT TO R&D:

Before going into R&D, the following equipment needs to be dished out amongst the players:

- SPARE BARRELS FOR EACH OF THEIR PISTOLS
- SEMI-AUTO SLUGTHROWER WITH 30 SLUGS AND 10 DUM-DUM ROUNDS
- A PAIR OF INFRA-RED GOGGLES EACH
- MODEL V DOCBOT
- 5 GRENADES

Not much eh? That's where the visit to theR &D comes in useful ...

Upon reaching R & D the players will be introduced to HERBERT-B and passed into his hands for a tour of the place. GM's are encouraged to use their devilish minds during the tour *(eg. why is that person in the white coat shuddering so much? Oh, his exo-skeleton design has something wrong with it.....).*

After their very enlightening tour of the area, the players will be led to a small corner wherein are all manner of goodies, all of which look very, very pretty...

HERBERT-B will then approach the various pieces of equipment and holding them up will offer them to the first player to volunteer to take it. If it's clear that none of the players want it, he will push it on whoever looks the most gullible!

The equipment/goodies are:

PSI-TEC

This is a small black box which could easily be carried around, about the same size as a large matchbox. *(A matchbox of course, is something that most troubleshooters won't be familiar with, don't forget this!).*

The box is designed to detect mental/psionic (not biological) activity and has a range of about 25m. It has been designed to fit snugly to most utility belts. It makes a high pitch noise whenever there is mental/psionic activity close-by, becoming higher in pitch as it nears it.

Unfortunately, it makes pitches which can't be heard when within 10m of the centre of activity. *(The Advanced Hearing mutant power can, somewhat ironically, probably hear the higher pitches if the player specifically notifies the GM that is his purpose).*

MET-TEC

This is almost identical to the above but has a range of 50m rather than 25m. It does of course, detect metal rather than psionic/mental activity.

Since the majority of Alpha Complex is made of metal however, this is a somewhat useless piece of equipment. Even more so when within 10m of metal!

AUTO-ICER

This is something of a cross between a syringe and a laser pistol in appearance.

This gun works in a similar manner to the Ice Gun except instead of 1 big needle, it is actually 10 little needles, each doing damage according to column 3 of the damage table (roll for each one individually).

It comes complete with just 1 round.

GAUSSER

This looks practically the same as a Laser Rifle, something which most players should be familiar with. It works like a Gauss Gun but the chance of it malfunctioning increases by 5% after each successive use.

Unlike a normal Gauss Gun, when the Gausser malfunctions it continues to work on within the 'radius' of 20m, continually firing and therefore wreaking havoc until all 100 rounds have been used, after which it'll promptly explode, causing damage in accordance with column 10 to all within 40m of the thing. (The explosion will affect everything, and not just bots and electrical equipment).

It is expected that the GM won't need to work out the damage of all 100 rounds but he must k
eep a record in case the weapon explodes once players are in range...

The Gausser comes with an energy pack which weighs a lot, therefore (apart from standard equipment and things of small size) will cause more than a little discomfort to players wishing to carry other weapons, maybe even reducing the player to having to drag the damned thing wherever he goes!

POWER DRILL DELUXE

This looks like a normal drill (once again something which players may not actually be familiar with).

It's a great drill, indeed, a superb one, but it has a tendency to be subject to power- surges (at the GM's discretion) resulting in the drill penetrating between 2 & 20 meters into whatever it's pointing at.

Players are required to make an Easy (2D10) attribute check on agility for their character to let go in time! Failing that, the player will become yet another one of those 'Wonders of Science' (a flying man!).

AUTO CON-RIFLE

This looks exactly like a Cone-Rifle, something which most players would've seen other Troubleshooters of higher security clearance carrying.

This comes with three cartridges, labelled 'A' 'B' & 'C' respectively. What they are is really up to the GM but making at least one of them a Tac-Nuke is most advisable, if only for the pyrotechnic display!

What's the difference between this and the Cone-Rifle? The answer to that is very little but still... the basic difference is that it has an increased 20% (79-00) chance of malfunctioning. The 'Auto' bit is derived from the fact that it can be used to respond to voice control (i.e. fire in 20 seconds, fire upon sensing something, etc.)

The Rifle has a sensor in the form of a comparison of visuals (i.e. if a picture taken at one time is different to the last one, it has sensed **something**. This cannot be used in the form 'Fire when sensing a person/animal' or any other specific nonsense).

In effect, the rifle has got a little bot-brain which can perform only the most basic actions. (Players should be told only that it operates or can operate through the use of voice command).

B-BOT

Operates through voice (as above). Column 12 of damage in 50m radius.

N-BOT

Operates through voice (and has a 'confirmation required' module fitted just in case!) as does a B-BOT. Does damage 18 on the Damage Table in 80m radius.

S-BOT

Also operates through voice. Does damage 14 to all within 10m, 13 to all within 20m, etc. to damage 10 to all within 50m.

All the Bots are small, droid-like things approximately 3 feet in height. If a player is given one to look after he will be requested to speak his name into a sensor located about the 'head' of the thing. This sets up the communication patterns necessary for the thing to work. It's best if only one Troubleshooter is given charge of all three Bots but don't tell them that!

Once all equipment (experimental or otherwise) has been dealt out, the players should not be given chance to test it out. Ignoring this I'm sure the treason points will mount up...

A HAIR-RAISING RIDE!

After their outfitting and visit to R&D, the players will be led to a waiting Autocar. Once strapped in, they are bade 'farewell' by the 'Official people', and, of course, left on a limb as to how to drive it!

The only things visible in the driver's seat are a 'steering wheel' of sorts, what looks to be a radar screen (with various dots moving about it-- nearby autocars!), a speech panel and of course the view through the windscreen.

In actual fact, the speech panel is a medium to the controlling computer (within the car) which can respond to most commands in their very basic form. It responds to commands such as 'Move Forward', 'Move Backward', 'Drift' and 'Turn', as well as Start and Stop. Its limitations and efficiency is left to the GMs discretion. However, remembering that this is **Paranoia** we're talking about, a **very fast** and **very efficient** Autocar wouldn't be totally out of place, and could be used by an imaginative GM (not that we are encouraging such an attitude, of course), to scare the living daylights out of the players. Plenty of obstacles on the Expressways en route, and if you're really nasty have a few given a chance to actually hit the PCs. Of course, if the Autocar is smashed up, the

party are in big trouble, not only for this treasonous act of destruction, but also for not reporting the fault (excessive speed!) upon diagnosing it.

It might also be worth mentioning (if you haven't guessed), that the players, accompanied by their burden of equipment, will not be able to get out of the Autocar save by blowing a hole in it (more treason points...). Of course, if permission is sought from The Computer, and a good enough reason is given, well, that's up to the GM again.

As this is an introduction to the Paranoia game, make the players go through hell, through the worst ordeal of their (very short) Troubleshooter's life, but don't kill them. There's plenty of time left for that.

Eventually, the Autocar will get closer and closer to the entrance to the GST sector. If they stop it in time, tell the players just how many µm (micro-metres) the car is from the wall. Now might be a good time to tell them that the doors will open automatically (providing no air has entered the car, through broken windows, etc.). However, the doors open outwards and upwards, and will only partially open due to the proximity of the wall. There isn't much room to squeeze out, carrying equipment and all. Of course, the players could try backing up slightly!

Presuming they eventually get out of the car safely and into the sector (don't forget the leader will require the entry code!), we can move on...

FIRST APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEIVING!

Upon entering the sector, the party will be struck by the pungent smell pervading the whole place. It's very similar to the smell that often emanates from the Food Vats. Composing themselves, the group will be confronted by what appears to be a corridor, but it's a little hard to tell with all the garbage scattered about the place. The corridor, like all the others in this sector, are unnoticeably hexagonal in cross-section. Much more noticeable is the thick coating of *Green Slime* which covers the floor, ceiling and walls. It seems to be seeping out of the fabric of the corridor, and out of itself too!

When they actually step into the place, one of the party is attacked from above by this animate green goo-- he will feel a massive **splodge** on his head, which will make a sickening squelch for all to hear. The massive splodge is actually just a large blob of green slime, totally inanimate, although it won't look it with the poor recipient thrashing about under its assault.

GMs are advised to make the other players aware of the thing, and make them believe it is alive and about to feed on the poor Troubleshooter's head; make them realise the threat it poses and don't discourage attempts to shoot at it.

Surviving this mishap, the players will see a strange blur at the end of the corridor. It's a little indistinct at the moment, but will be of a clear colour, one security level **higher** than the player with the highest security clearance level. It is, in fact, a **LAS-GATE** (See appendix).

All corridors and passages detailed on the map are in the same condition as already described, so don't forget to describe the Green Slime and garbage upon entering each room. From the point marked **X** on the map, the corridors and rooms will be **surprisingly** spotless.

From hereon, the GM is free to populate the complex with whatever encounters and devices he pleases. Several 'happenings' are detailed, which may be used if required, though of necessity in the order presented.

1.THE GHOST SEQUENCE:

At a convenient moment, the players will hear the following coming from all corners:-

"About time as well! I was wondering why you jokers were taking so long, but looking at you, I think I was wasting my time..."

ZEE-Y (the speaker) will then pause to allow the PCs to respond, or to maybe try and coax him out (loud laughter abounds...), or maybe to just load their weapons. Try to encourage an inventive response by the PCs, and **then** tell them just how fruitless their efforts have been.

"Anyway, since you're here, I'd better start with the entertainment eh?"

Another pause...

"I think we'll open the show with that Crackbot behind you..."

At this point, a **Crackbot** will come screeching around the corner, emitting an ear-piercing whine, as of somebody being scrambled with their own legs. (See Appendix for details.)

If players don't shoot at it immediately, emphasize its speed and rapidly decreasing proximity. Their shots won't seem to have any effect on the thing, and as it rapidly approaches, it will collide with the group, passing harmlessly through them as if an apparition. Round 1 to the Crackbot, and the players have wasted some ammunition...

"Quite an impressive ghost, eh? But what of those two..."

This time there are two of them, exhibiting similar behaviour and consequences as the first one.

"Perhaps you'd like to reload your weapons? After all, you never know what could come round the corner, or through the walls... Whoops! Sorry to interrupt, but those three look rather nasty, don't they?"

Two will come from one end and one from the other. The players will understandably mistake them for being real. But they're not.

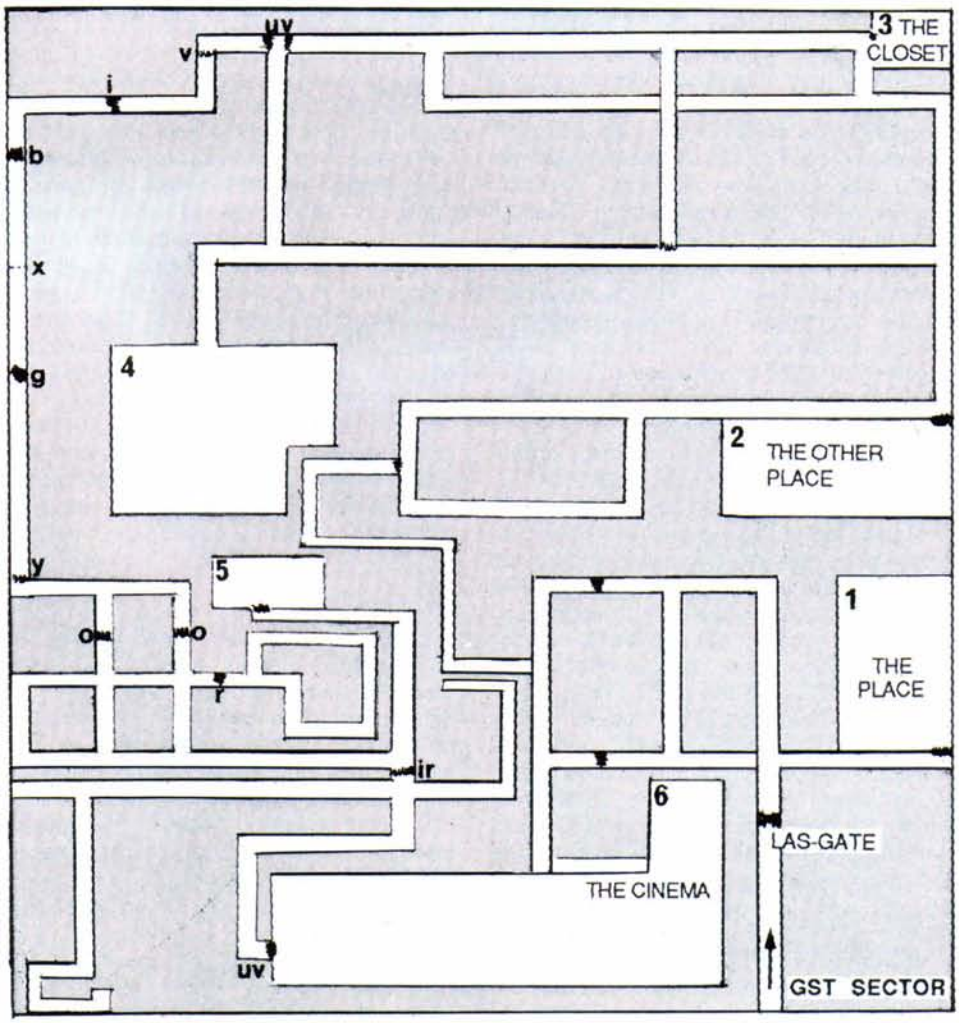
"And what about these four?"

Two from each end this time, and yes, they're real. VERY REAL.

2.THE ROOM:

This is an empty room, totally bare, containing nothing, a naked chamber, a nude vestibule. The players are heartily advised to do something! Why in The Computer's great name would there be an empty room in GST sector with a rather lethal LAS-GATE attached?

There has to be something here! Encourage the players to search for



something, raking over every nook and cranny, frantically searching for... nothing. It's just an empty room.

The metallic walls are unusually strong, though, and apart from being 'nuked' cannot be damaged in any way (No, a blunt Power Drill Deluxe won't go down too well with The Computer...). The ceiling is of the same material and strength, but the floor is a normal (?) concrete one, which will no doubt baffle the PCs (they've never seen anything like it! It's so soft). Enterprising Troubleshooters should find themselves in Sector China after about 365 days if they opt to try the drill on this substance.

3.THE OTHER ROOM:

This is exactly the same as **The Room** in size, and looks very similar. The only difference is the very strange and mysterious pillar in the middle of it. This behaves exactly like the walls despite its much more 'silvery' appearance. Of absolutely no significance, discerning Troubleshooters might guess that it is very valuable and of great interest to **Pro-Tech** societies (which it isn't).

4.THE CLOSET:

The Las-Gate at the entrance to the closet is "Kinda Brownish". In actual fact, it's a normal oak door, but the players don't know what oak is, and are expecting a LAS-GATE, so "*In front of you stands something very similar to the other LAS-GATES. Unfortunately, being kinda brownish in colour, you're not quite sure...*"

At this point, any players with skill in *Old Reckoning Cultures* should be notified by secret note that it's an oaken door.

However they manage to open the door, all those PCs without skill in Hostile Environments should make an Insanity effects roll on d100-25. Tumbling all over their feet are lots and lots of Old Reckoning objects and artefacts. Exactly what there is (and, more importantly, what there isn't) is really up to the GM. Encourage them to touch things, handling all the weird and wonderful weapons, clocks, children's toys, etc. and then remind them it's treasonous to possess such items (I hope none of the PCs decided to *steal* anything).

Among the rest of the rubbish is a shred of cloth, 'kinda brownish' in colour. In actual fact, it belonged to an ORANGE Troubleshooter, a member of a previous group to be precise, but age has taken its toll. The GM should subtlely remind the players of their instructions to report on the status and locale of the previous group. An inventive Troubleshooter will immediately report the finding of a piece of cloth to The Computer, presuming the other group to have been vapourised. The Computer will know this to be a lie, since if something is vapourised, it leaves absolutely no trace whatever, and thus will not leave a piece of cloth. Note down the treason points and encourage the players out of the room.

5.ZEE-Y AND THE CINEMA:

Upon entering, players find themselves in a massive circular chamber. The walls are white and in the centre of the room are six bed-like things, similar to those things they have seen in The Computer's Interrogation Rooms.

As soon as they enter, they will be confronted with a lot of Crackbots and a lot of Goonbots. Each player should make a *Difficult Attribute Check* on their *agility* to see if they get out in time. If failing the check, they'll be grabbed by the Crackbots and forced to lie on the 'beds' and strapped in tightly.

Once all captives are strapped in, they will be treated to a spectacle that no Troubleshooter should be treated to. The victim gets to see a lengthy 'film' documenting the Outside and shows the wildlife, the plants and flowers, the clouds floating over the horizon, etc. (See the epic film "Soylent Green"). This 'treatment' acts a little bit like the *Communist Propoganda* skill, but instead passes on the *Old Reckoning Cultures* skill to the recipient.

Following this treat, the player is released, taken outside the sector by the Crackbots, and told to go home. If they re-enter, they will doubtless get to meet ZEE-Y and be given his side of the story (See GM's Background) and admitted to the cause of the **Death Leopard** society.

Any players who escape this treatment will get hopelessly lost in the complex, and eventually find their way back to The Cinema, or else find the exit and return to Alpha Complex.

ROUNDING UP:

What we have covered so far is the bare bones for a scenario that can be as large as you want. There are many more corridors and rooms on GST sector than detailed here. Many contain Goonbots and Crackbots and the like. The rest can be empty, or can contain whatever gadgets and electronic toys you care to think up. We know of one room in particular which contains millions of bits 'n' bots that ZEE-Y uses to build his electronic toys. He also has a vast databank, thousands of vid. films and a library at his disposal. And, of course, he has the White Box, and a desire for vengeance on the High Programmer.

Of course, it is up to the GM to 'flesh out' this adventure if he wishes, and it is up to the players to complete their 'routine mission'-- I'm quite sure they haven't fulfilled their Mission Alert brief!

APPENDIX:

LAS-GATES: These are dotted about the complex. Visually, they're composed of many beams which make a strange criss-crossing complex. Unless indicated on the map, they are always one colour higher than the security clearance of the highest ranking Troubleshooter.

They act in a similar manner to coloured laser barrels, meaning that players of ORANGE security status can step harmlessly through ORANGE and RED LAS-GATES.

RED LAS-GATES require a roll on column 8 of the damage table, ORANGE on column 9, right up to column 15 for ULTRA-VIOLET (white)...

GMs may wish to modify the rolls.

CRACKBOT:

This is akin to a large robo-dog, but with the ability to travel through the air. A very large set of gnashers in its very large mouth dominates its appearance.

They have two 'arms' which extend from the back and over the head, within each of which is the equivalent of a cone-rifle loaded with unlimited *Napalm* rounds.

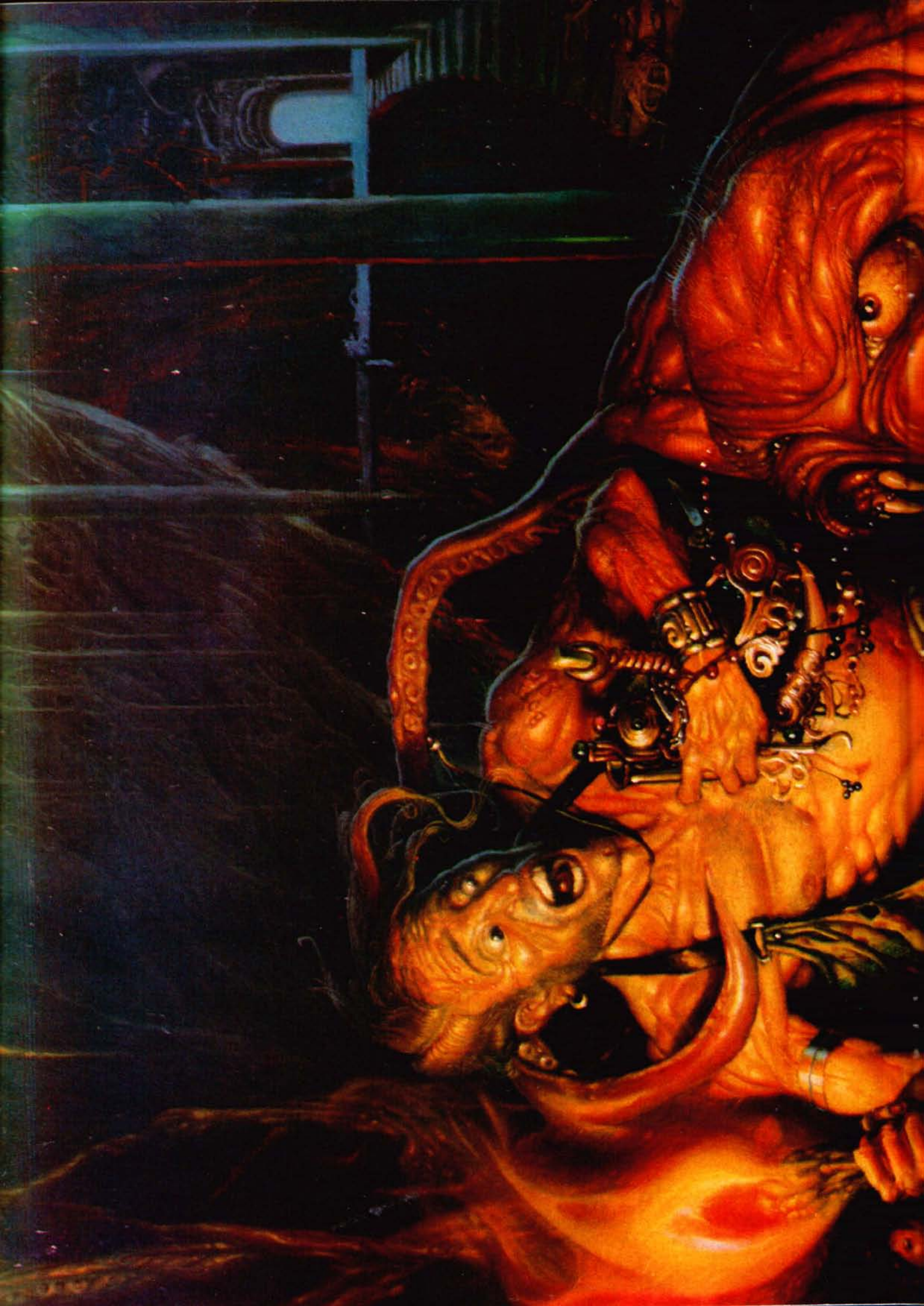
Details: Small brain; narrow, literal programming.
Move: legs, hover. **Speed:** very fast
Weapons: 2 cone-rifles with napalm rounds. **To Hit:** 60%.
Armour equivalent: Polished Plate.

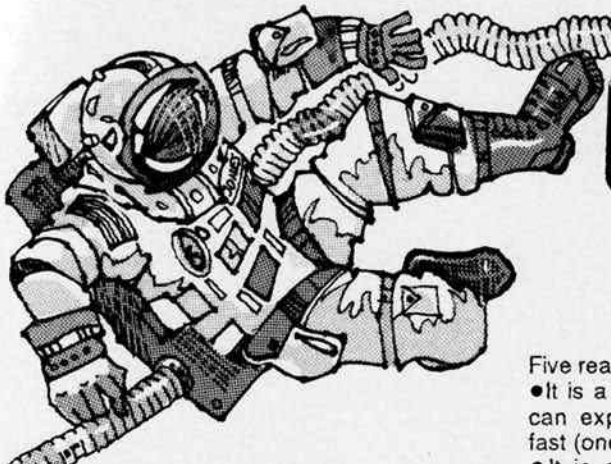
GOONBOT:

This is something of a cross between a large worm and a big dragon, approximately 6 feet high in standard pose (half up-right). They have a large hole in their 'chest', which acts like a plasma generator (not that the players will have the chance (fortunately) to discover this).

Details: Medium brain; narrow, flexible programming.
Move: Legs. **Speed:** Sluggish.
Weapons: 1 plasma generator installed in 'chest'. **To Hit:** 75%.
Armour Equivalent: Combat Suit.

Merry Christmas ~
to all our readers!
MARTIN McKENNA.





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Contact: Rob Lunn (0425) 610086 or;
Mark Ryan (0590) 43422

WEYMOUTH: Wanted; players and GMs (16+) for any RPGs - with view to starting regular Adult club/group.
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Jon Freeman, 3 Coppice Court, Broadwey, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 5SA.

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Comment: Need new members since many have gone off to university etc.
Contact: Dave Pashby 04012 - 5941
Mark Hilditch 0482 - 860769

Godalming Roleplayers Society - Players and DM's of either sex, aged 17+ to take part in any Fantasy RPG's and to swap info/play PBM's. Contact Sean Dillon, 74 Aaron's Hill. Godalming, Surrey, GU7 2LJ.

FANZINES FOREVER...?

by Alex Bardy & Ben Goodale

The time has come to consider the question - *"What are we trying to do with this column?"*. We believe we are here to try and give 'the uninitiated' an insight into what it's all about. To this end we have decided to produce for you a two-part mini-series. The first is in this issue and concentrates on the *'new blood'* in the fanzine world, the second will appear next issue and concentrate on the *'established faves'*.

If some of the following presents a depressing picture, this is because new zines have a tendency to be "not good", but despite this, a lot of quanity has recently entered the market, and the fanzines world looks healthier than it has done for quite a while. Anyway, lets get on with it...

First to make an appearance was **SPACE OPERATIONS,** a well presented piece of work devoting itself to **Space Opera** and other **FGU** games. Issue #1 contains rules for *'Advanced Space Opera'* designed by the editor, which no doubt involved a lot of time and effort, a comic-strip which although excellently drawn is very much an illustrated scenario, a **Space Opera** scenario, and various features. All useful stuff, but somewhat unoriginal in concept, and there is no discursive material at all. It's of some interest to SF fans and indispensible to Space Opera players.

Whilst on the subject of SF games, **Alex** (who me?) has launched **CEREBRETRON,** a zine for SF gamers and SF fans in general. Issue # 1 is neatly presented, and has good art (though not enough!). The contents are interesting and discursive, of use for most SF systems. There are ideas for SF games, an article on introducing *horror* into *SFRPG's* (with some SF horror fiction thrown in), a look at *Post-Holocaust* games, a discussion of *Time Travel*, and more fiction. The highlight is a very good 16-page *Doctor Who* scenario. Overall, an absolute mut for SF gamers, if there are any left... (What are you gettin' at Ben?).

Another zine which Alex has a tentacle in is **AMULET,** edited by **Richard Henderson** who formally co-edited **DARK ELF** with **Alex**. This zine sports a colour cover (envy..) and typesetting (seethe...). There are various good FRP articles, the announcement of the **1986 ROLEGAMING FANZINES POLL** (don't forget to vote!), and a 10-page piece on *American Football* which is utterly useless if you're not into the game. Overall another very good zine, as long as it drops the football...

SEVENTH SIN OF THE SALAMANDER is quite short at just 28 pages, and there is little art, but overall it looks quite nice. The articles are all very readable, with an article on magic in RPG's, fiction, a review of the **Dr Who RPG,** and various other items. Most notable is a very interesting campaign idea for new aliens in **Golden Heroes,** which seems to be very playable for SFRPG's too. A nice zine.

Next we come to **ALICE,** which is a relaunch of a fanzine called **THIS WAY UP** which appeared earlier this year. It's a lot better than its predecessor, with gaming articles covering a wide range of topics, and some fiction (but don't buy it for that). It's small (20-pages), cheap, monthly and is certainly worth trying.

I DON'T WANNA GO BACK IN THE BOX sports great art and presentation, but that's where it stops. The contents are supposed to be funny and aren't, the silly fiction is supposed to be funny but it's silly , the scenario is supposed to be good (presumably) but isn't , and the spacefillers are meant to fill space, and do so with unbelievable success. We didn't find it amusing but others have, so maybe you will, but you're been warned...

INTELLECT DEVOURER is another well illustrated and presented zine, its only feal fault being its size; the majority is unreduced text on A5 pages. Within it are pieces on **Car Wars, CoC,** a **Zitadel** painting guide, and heaps of magazine and film reviews. All round it's very enjoyable, just a bit too small.

Now some of the slightly doubtful stuff..

THE BUBONIC PLAGIARIST appears to have got off to a good start, including pieces for most games (including **AD&D, CoC, RQII &III,** and **Traveller**), all of which is acceptable but rather unoriginal. Adding a lighter edge is a report of the editor's trip to the *'Monsters of Rock'* festival at Castle Donnington. All this zine lacks is good presentation and a dab of character, but this should have picked up in a couple of issues.

RUNERITER is a zine dedicated entirely to **Runequest**, and as such should prove very useful to GM's and players. Presentation is dreadful, with very small computer print, and the lack of letraset, art and staples didn't help, not to mention printing the whole thing on green paper(!). Despite this the contents are quite useful, with articles expanding the RQ rules, and two scenarios. Worth a look if you play RQ, otherwise look elsewhere.

ADVENTURERS ANONYMOUS is split into four mini-zines in order to cover *cartoons, Horror RPG's, SFRPG's* and *Car Wars* type games. It's a nice idea which unfortunately doesn't work, since the zine itself is just 20-pages long, and nearly all the text is unreduced A5 (again). However, the writing style is smooth, and if more pages are added and the type reduced, this zine could have potential. The **Car Wars** bit is a little pointless considering the editor runs **Burning Rubber** as well...

BURNING RUBBER #3 (which shouldn't strictly be included in this section of the col, but it follows nicely from the previous zine) actually begins to serialise the **Burning Rubber** rules, so if you fork out 50p you get the first part of a complete role-playing game where you can take the wheel of a *Car Wars*-type vehicle. Unmissable if you want a cheap RPG which seems to be well thought out.

A zine with the same idea as *Adventurers Anonymous* is **Trizine**, which as you've probably guessed is split in three, with *Horror, SF* and *Fantasy* sections. All that these sections consist of are scenarios, one in each. Okay, but very amateur; you may find something of interest, but we wouldn't like to guarantee it.

Anyway, enough first issues, onto the highlights-

First comes the much publicised **SOUND & FURY/IVORY TOWER** team-up, which has a glossy cover (wow!) and far more besides, including three scenarios (for SF, FRP games, and **Ghostbusters**), discursive articles (magic,death,etc.), reviews, and a write-up of *DRAGON-AID*. In the middle, fitting snugly, is the cartoon *'Judge Fredd meets The Dungeoneers'* which proves to be a beautiful combination of the two strips usually met within each zine. Overall, if you don't get this you've got a screw loose! If you've had your doubts about fanzines or generally despise them, make sure you get this!

DIE RUBEZAHL#2 finally arrived (at Gamesday), and sees a lot of improvement on #1. Whilst issue 1 was somewhat dull in places, this issue is much more readable and combined with the art (by *Martin McKenna*) is well worth the price. Within it is some very strange fiction, a review of *'Drugonmeet 86'*, letters, a critical appraisal of the **Jugde Dredd RPG**, and a very odd scenario which isn't really for any particular game (set in modern day America with Libyan terrorists!). This zine is not recommended for the under 14's since not only is it weird but downright disgusting in places! (Why are the sales rocketing?). Definitely

different, and quite a few people won't like it but still....

Recently launched was:-
HYPERACTIVE, which we mentioned in ADVENTURER #4. Though we don't have a copy, we did see one , it looked okay, though without reading it we can't say much. Rumours are rife that a similiar zine, printing ready produced contributions, may be launched.... Watch this space

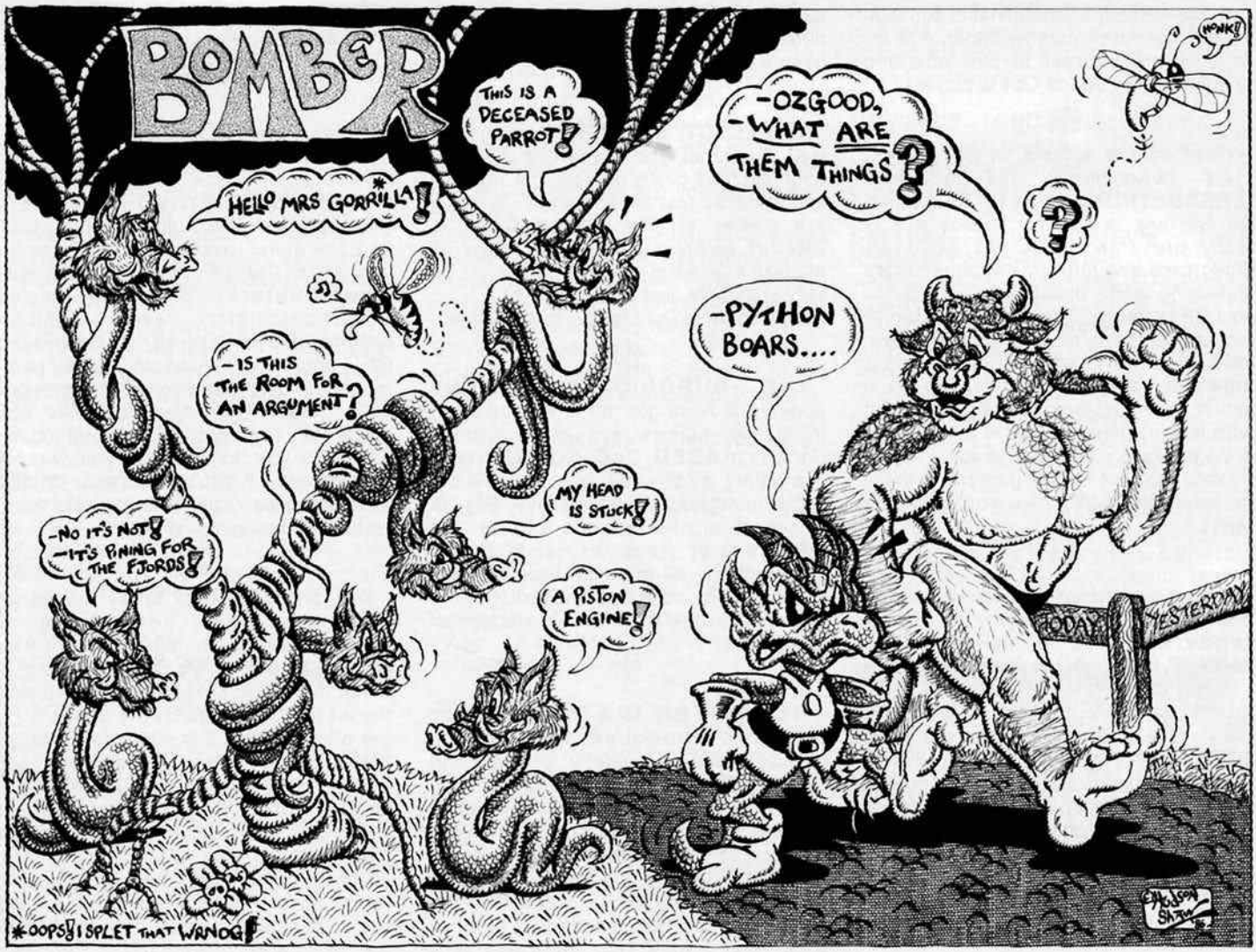
FIST (short for **F**anzine **I**ist), is an 8-page affair which is produced to advertise other fanzines. It contains adverts for a variety of different zines, and since it's free for the price of an S.A.E., you can't exactly go wong can you? It'll give you the chance to get a taste of various fanzines without having to buy them. Get a copy from **James Wallis** at the **SOUND & FURY** address-

Also available on receipt of an S.A.E. is a **1986 FANZINE POLL** entry, get in touch with Alex about this.

Remember the zine pack? Well, after a short holiday it's back, having merged with *Mark Nelson's 'Fanzine Starter Pack'* - Mark will be selling it at conventions. For £2.60 (which includes postage) you get five great(?) zines. To date the pack has included **Sound & Fury, Telegraph Road, Starquester, Utter Drivel, Amulet, Cerebretron, Imazine, Harvest Time and Tome of Horrors.** Also most buyers get a freebee of some sort,though this isn't guaranteed. Send a cheque/postal order for £2.60, made payable to **BEN GOODALE**, to Ben at the address below.

RELEVANT ADDRESSES

Alex Bardy, 28b Gladsmuir Road, Archway, London, N19 3JX. (Editor of EH?, #8 now out @ 40p - PBM/Chat AND Cerebretron, #2 now out @ 60p - SFPRG/SF)
Ben Goodale, Cairnmore, Crianlarich, Perthshire, FK20 8QS. (Editor of Utter Drivel, #6 out soon, @ 75p - FRP/Chat)
Seventh Sin of the Salamander: Jonathan Laidlow, Park House, Langrigg, Carlisle, CA5 3LL. (60p, A5 28pp)
Alice: Richard Campbell, 7 Carrick Park, Ayr, KA7 2SL. (30p & stamp. A5 20pp)
The Bubonic Plagiarist: 42 Park Hill, Ampthill. Bedford. (75p, A5 46pp)
Adventurers Anonymous & Burning Rubber: Richard Stitson, 186 Dunraven Drive, Derriford, Plymouth, Devon, PL6 6AZ. (45p and 50p)
Space Operations: Brian Scott, 7 Beach Grove, Springwell, Gateshead NE9 7RB (£1.20, A4 40pp)
Amulet: Richard Henderson, 7 Havering, Castlehaven Road, London NW1 8TH. (60p, A5 36pp)
I Don't Wanna Go Back in the Box: John J Smith, 50 Pentland Avenue, Port Glasgow, Inverclyde, PA14 6LF (60p, A5 40pp)
Intellect Devourer: Dave Hughes, 104 Highcliffe Road, Wickford, Essex, SS11 8JX. (60p, A5 unreduced 36pp)
Runeriter: Neil Smith, 64 John Kennedy Ave. Coseley, Bilston W. Midlands (50p, A5 36pp)
Hyperactive: Nick Edwards, Cherrylea, Wells Rd, Dundry, Bristol (60p, A5 32pp)
Sound & Fury/Ivory Tower: James Wallis, The Manor House, Little Bealings, Woodbridge, Suflok.IP13 6LL. (75p A5 72pp)
Die Rubezahl: Pete Blanchard, 4 Holly Acre, Prey Heath, Mayford, Woking, Surrey, GU22 0SL. (£1.00, A4 48pp)



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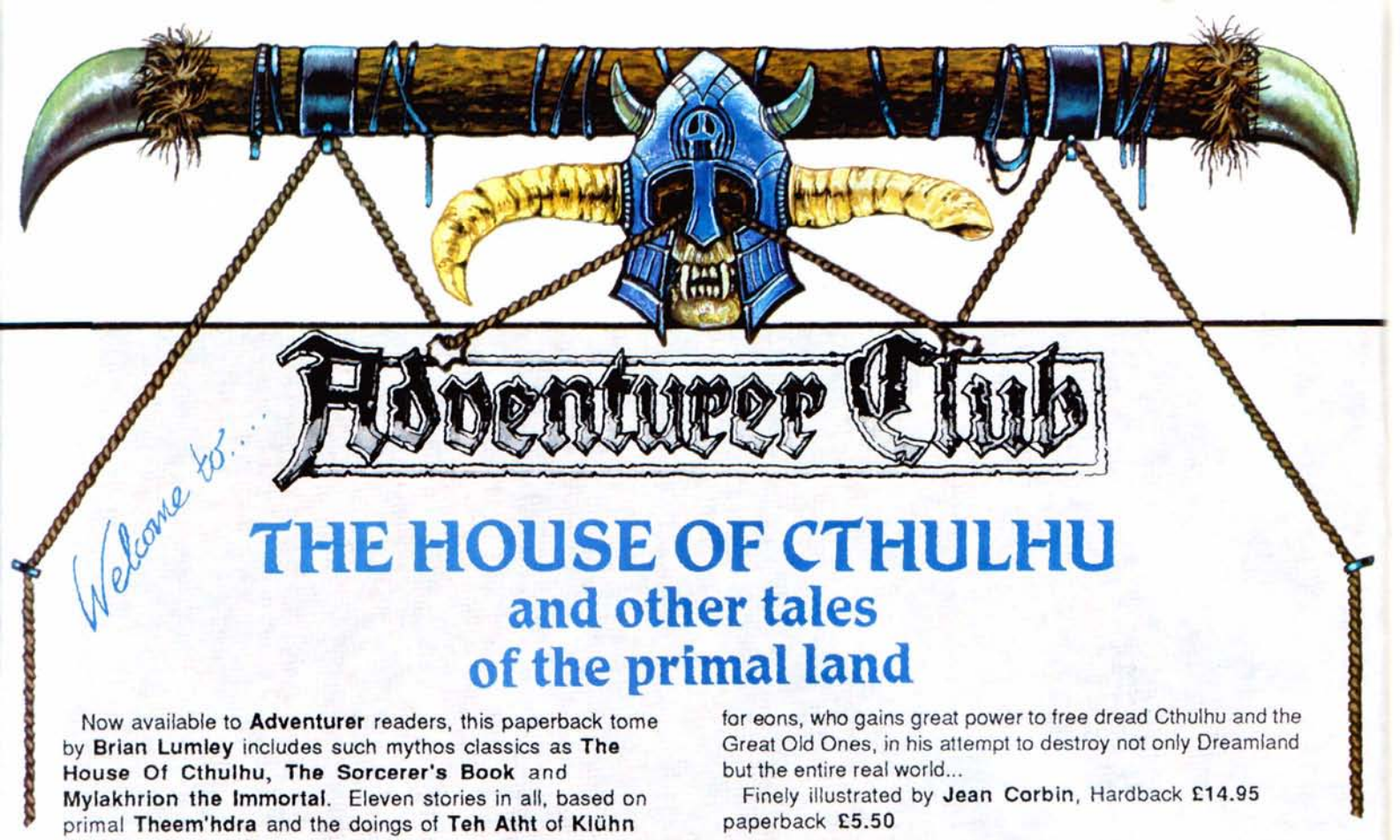
..... FREE ENTERRISE ABOUNDS..
OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL
once bitten
THAT WEIRD TEMPLE IS NEAR HERE
I'LL LAY LOW THERE FOR A WHILE
EMPTY!
SHORTLY, AT A SAFE DISTANCE..
LET'S SEE WHAT WE'VE SALVAGED FROM THIS FIASCO!
I PICKED UP (UM) A FEW COINS
I GOT SOME COINS, AND A KNIFE.. ..OR TWO
SOMEONE MAY PAY TO HAVE THEIR NOSE BACK
COINS
AFTER DEDUCTING THE PRICE OF THE WAGON WE HAVE ENOUGH FOR OUR SUPPER IN THIS HOSTELRY.
FIVE COPPERS!! NOT MUCH FOR NEARLY BEING EATEN!... ..AND AMBERGRIS! YOU SHOULD KNOW I FROWN UPON NUDITY!
WELL MY GOWN WAS ALL IN RAGS...
BESIDES I'M NOT NAKED..
I'M STILL WEARING BICYCLE CLIPS!
TWENTY GROATS ARE ALL THAT'S LEFT... AFTER DEDUCTIONS FOR TRANSPORT, MY TIME, WEAR AND TEAR ETC. SO I'LL BE OFF NOW FOR AN EVENING OF Thanksgiving.. ER.. FOR OUR SAFE RETURN!
MEANWHILE, UNDER THE BACK STAIRS OF AN OBSCURE TEMPLE NEARBY....
I MANAGED TO HOLD ON TO FIFTEEN CROWNS.... NOT SO BAD I S'POSE..
HUH.. WASSAT?
CRACK
OYEA.. IT'S THAT NUT I FOUND IN A PURSE LAST TIME I HID HERE
WELL I'M FEELING A BIT PECKISH...
...BUT LARD WILL DO INST'..... AIEE! A GREAT EVIL HAS BEEN UNLEASHED IN OUR VICINITY!
MAGIC ITEMS 5SP.
NEXT: VILE EVIL!



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PROOF OF PURCHASE

'WHAT IS PLAY BY MAIL?'

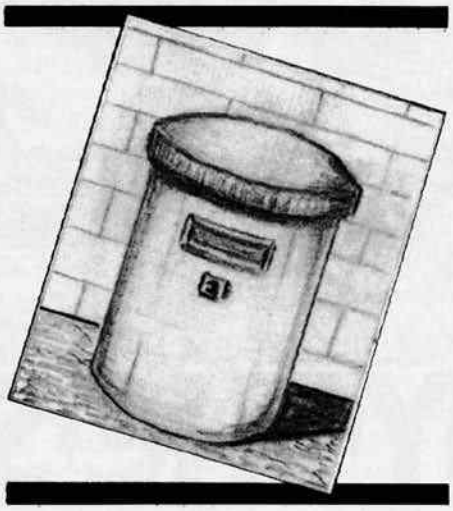
by Wayne Bootleg

I am going to concentrate on reviewing **team** or **tribal** p.b.m's this month. In these games you play a group of people (the size varies from game to game) either trying to stay alive or to achieve a set objective. Obviously there are too many games on the market for me to mention them all by name, so I am going to comment upon a couple of games that I have personally sampled which should give you some ideas of how they work.

First off is **"Crasimoff's World"** (C.W), a game set in a fantasy world, where dwarfs and swamp creatures abound. You start off with a team of 10 people which can be any combination of priests, fighters or mages. Your leader is considered a warrior type and it is his job to lead your group to riches, fortune or to death. To the game's merit, it has probably the biggest collection of unusual animals ever heard of; Wobblers, Thru-Thrus and Kresh to name but a few!! If token collecting is your thing then this game is for you, as it has hundreds upon hundreds of tokens in respect of magic plants, animals and places. To its detriment, however the turns tend to be unexciting (eg. you get a long description of the weather!!) and despite rule changes, the movement rate is still restrictive. I should also mention that the turns are quite erratic, (with a slow turn around) but it must be said that **K.J.C. Games** have had G.M. problems lately and I am reliably informed that there is going to be a concerted effort to revamp the game entirely. I sincerely hope that this is the case, as C.W. was the first P.B.M. I ever played and I have considerable sentimental ties with it. Nevertheless the standard it set many years ago has slipped and in its present form the game is sadly lacking in many departments. I propose to review this game in more depth at a later date, and will be able to give you an update then. For further details, contact:

K.J.C Games, P.O. Box 11,
Cleveleys, Blackpool, Lancs.
FY5 2UL

Moving off at a different tack now, **"Soccer Star"** is (as one would expect) a football orientated, computer moderated game. The aim is to win one (or more) of the 15 competitions available. You have the choice of many different league titles or cup competitions to strive for, and on the whole the game is well run. The rulebook is well written, if not too well printed and the game itself is quite simple to understand. You first create your team of 14 players, choose a strip and give your team an original name. All the players then receive a skill rating (1=park player standard 10=world class) and then



it is up to you as manager to pick the team for your first match against another player's team. You send these off and a week later you receive a results sheet showing how your team (and your opponents) did, with a break-down of the attendance, the numbers of corners and throw-ins you had, shots at goal, bookings plus sendings off, together with the full results and up-to-date divisional tables for your league. The game is quite realistic, with a transfer market, league tables, fluctuating attendance, and suspensions to name a few areas of interest. My only criticisms of the game are that the results sheet is quite stark, and if you did badly continuously, you wouldn't want to pay to get hammered 5-0 every week!! You should also note that there are fixed deadlines for this game, so if you miss one you are in trouble. On the whole, the game is simple to play, easy to understand and enjoyable, but the more tactically minded of you would find that it lacks a real mental challenge. However, if you fancy your chances as a Ron Atkinson (sic), I have arranged with the people who run **Soccer Star** for all **Adventurer** readers to receive a set up for half the usual price and for your first turn to be processed free! So send £1.50 and mention **Adventurer** to take advantage of their offer:

Pace Games (B.A.),
164 Abbotsford Drive, St Annes,
Nottingham. NG3 1NE.

Turning back to fantasy for a moment, **"Arcadia"** is a fantasy wargame, where trading amongst the players is of utmost importance. Another computer-moderated, fixed deadline P.B.M., it has been designed so that you cannot just go trundling along with your massive army and cause trouble with your neighbours. The rule book is very vague being in the "you'll find out about the game as you go along" style and takes a couple of reads to understand fully. You play a commander who has a city plus three armies and it is your aim to conquer as many of the other players' cities as possible. Furthermore, you have to improve the defence of your city, sell and buy grain to convert to gold. This enables you to purchase weapons, recruit more soldiers and feed them all. You also have to seek out the other players' cities and to this end you send out your *Wozem birds.* These birds have limited intelligence and can fly to a location you desire, then return giving you a descripiton of the site. However, they have a natural enemy in another bird called the *Roc:* these birds usually hover at a high altitude over cities and swoop down on Wozems to capture them! The Wozems then switch allegiance and work for their new leaders. So, if you lose a Wozem, there is usually something interesting in the hex to which you sent it. When you find a city and get one of your armies camped outside it, you have quite a few options. You can do anything from ignore it to attack it in many different ways.

This game can be as easy or as hard as you make it. I would advise you to contact several other players and form an alliance, as sooner or later you will find other players ganging up on you. If you like double-dealing, back stabbing and being tactically devious, then this game is for you. I particularily liked the map that is supplied, as it also makes a nice poster for your bedroom wall. You get little round sticky labels too!! Set-up is £5, which includes two free turns, and further turns are £1.50, post free. Interested?
Contact:

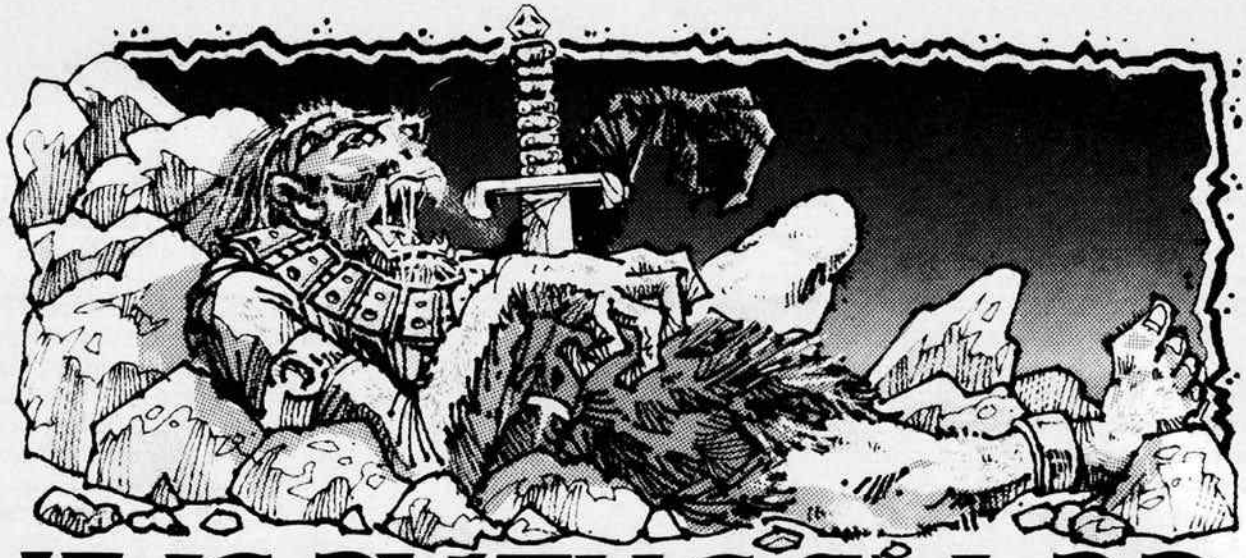
Jade Games, P.O.Box 54,
Southsea, Hants. PO4 ONA

In closing, I'd like to mention a couple of points of importance; **Sloth Enterprises** have received over 500 replies from Adventurer readers and have asked me to point out that the offer they made in the last issue is now closed. They are preparing a waiting list and although there will be a delay of a couple of weeks, I am assured that all applications will be answered.

I have received several commun- ic ations from readers via this magazine and whilst I welcome enquires and general queries, if you want a reply please enclose a s.s.a.e. Make all your enquiries, complaints or suggestions to:
Wayne,
59 Kiln Court, Newell Street,
Poplar, London. E14

May your rounds be delivered by **Hermes,** see ya again in thirty,

Wayne.



LIVE·BY·THE·SWORD

READERS' LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please address all letters to: LIVE BY THE SWORD, ADVENTURER, 85 Victoria Street, Liverpool L1 6DG.

PHIL RADLEY, Essex: Have you ever thought that SF is not as popular as fantasy because people like you do not write about it, or that people don't contribute any SF articles because you haven't even sniffed at SF in your 4 issues.

Does Paranoia count as SF, I wonder... I appreciate your concern for more SF scenarios, but there are a lot of fantasy players out there. We will give more space to science fiction articles just as soon as we can find out from all the definitions of SF we're receiving, exactly what the word means!

▼

SIMON NICHOLSON, Slough: I think Wendy Graham has gone too far this time! "Star Trek, under the *guise* of science fiction..." (VB #4) Miss Graham is implying that anything which contains intelligent social comment cannot possibly be SF. Do I really have to mention *Wells, Huxley, Orwell, Ballard and Lessing?* Ever since *Swift's* "Gulliver's Travels", imaginative fiction has been a useful insight into the real world. It is a shame that most people associate SF with the schlock image which Miss Graham is perpetrating, and is probably the reason why most SF rpgs are based on Space Opera (the fiction, not the game!).

Come on, **Adventurer!** These articles are more likely to deter prospective SF fans than attract them. And you haven't even mentioned the **BSFA**...

KEVIN HASSALL, Sevenoaks: Aaahhrggg! *"They crewed the ship with a mixture of colours and races"* (VB #4). Which ship? On the "Enterprise" (and I don't care what Wendy says U.S.S. stands for, the connotations are the same), the Captain and second mate are **WASP** Americans (WASP?-- White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), the Chief Engineer is a WASP Scot (gasp!) and the 1st. mate may be an alien, but he's a white one with an American accent! The presence of non-WASP Americans in junior bridge positions merely accentuates the American supremacist ideals. Not only is the Enterprise (and apparently the entire fleet) commanded by Yanks, but even the aliens (who also espouse over-simplistic Western traditional and contemporary values; truth, rationality and honour) are almost entirely white!

It looks like Wendy Graham has fallen prey to a lot of criticism, doesn't it? Perhaps these next letters (and Wendy's own defence in her column this issue) will help balance things a little...

▼

JOHN FRENCH, W. Yorks: On the subject of SF, though I read a lot, I like both *Star Trek* and *Harlan Ellison*, but you can't expect everyone to- literature is like music; you choose it according to your mood and intellectual needs of the moment, but you'll never get every Motorhead fan to like Mozart as well!

TIM ELLIS, W. Midlands: *Nic Coates* (LBTS#4) may be expecting too much- I fail to see why it is 'verging on the criminal' to mention Star Trek without mentioning *Harlan Ellison*- has he made some great contribution to the series that I (and presumably Miss Graham) am unaware of, or is it just that Nic considers him to be superior to Mr. Rodenberry- in which case he is falling into the same pit that he has cast Wendy into in his letter.

Also, I would like to adapt *Norman Spinrad's* definition to accord with **WH Smith's** apparent shelving policy; *"Science Fiction is anything published as Science fiction, or as fantasy, or written by an author who has previously written such works, or has a 'weird' cover painting a la Rodney Mathews, Peet Ellison- oh yes, and it's close enough to horror to lump them together on the same bookshelf"*.

Well, I did go and mention the word *'wargame'* in one issue of Adventurer, and it certainly got a mixed response:

▼

KEVIN HASSALL: Although myself a Fantasy Wargamer, I have no wish to see "Warclub" covered in **Adventurer**. Primarily, this is because Adventurer is edited and read by serious, knowledgeable role-players- and it shows. It is NOT edited and read by serious, knowledgeable wargamers- and there's a world of difference between the two. *Miniature Wargames* has printed one or two "Fantasy" Wargames articles of considerably higher quality than anything ever printed in a rpg magazine.

JANET & PETER VIALLS, Huntingdon: In response to Andy King and Ian Clegg (LBTS#4), NO!!! Mercy! Anything but that! The last thing we want to see is wargaming: our hobby is roleplaying, not wargaming, and the two are not the same. Warhammer is more than amply covered in White Dwarf and the wargaming magazines, so keep it out of **Adventurer.**

▼

PETER STANTON, Aberdeen: I think pretty soon you are going to run out of figures manufacturers to cover in **Figures Front**. If you do, I imagine you will be covering modelling, and making dioramas, etc. I should think this might just lead onto a series of articles on Fantasy Wargaming. Hurray!!!

▼

JOHN FRENCH: Onto scenarios, I'd just like to make two points; 1. Systemless scenarios are to my taste, but 2. It is impossible to free them of the restrictions imposed by the rules philosophy. To say, as Paul Goddard does (LBTS#3), that we should base all "Sword & Sorcery" adventures on AD&D merely reveals that he can have played little else. AD&D assumes a pseudo-medieval environment in which potent magics rest in the hands of a few unusual individuals. Any scenario based on this premise is only suitable for use in a campaign based on this premise, whether it is written for AD&D or any other game. However, to take a popular example, RuneQuest assumes a pseudo Dark Age society in which magics are less powerful, but virtually everyone knows at least one or two spells. A scenario based on the former premise is of little value here, and the second premise (RQ) creates scenarios of no value to campaigns based on the former. Personally, I feel that scenarios are too campaign-specific; you either have to base them in a specific world (Greyhawk, Glorantha, or possibly a magazine world), or merely give simple plot outlines and ideas for personal expansion by the GM.

▼

CHRIS STIMSON, Prescot: I don't want to knock what is a very good magazine, but a few spaceships instead of Hobbits please!

▼

R.G. LOWE, Aberdeen: Firstly, Ian Sewell's opinion (LBTS#2) that scenarios, and by inference modules, dictate the actions of players is not correct in most cases. A scenario should have a storyline threading it together, and therefore the actions of the players will dictate how the NPCs and monsters respond. A well-written scenario will be populated with many NPCs and beasts, all of whom will react in some manner to the party's actions. For example, if a group of guards is attacked by a party, the intelligent reaction would be to send for reinforcements immediately. The players woud then be faced with a more dangerous situation than they originally thought, and may have to make good their escape. This is not dictating player actions, but simply playing 'monsters' intelligently.

However, Mr. Sewell is correct in that many adventures do dictate too precisely what will become of characters, regardless of their actions. I cite as an example the FASA Traveller module "Legend of the Sky Raiders", where the GM is instructed to 'manipulate' the players into surrender at one point. I know of many players who do not appreciate this kind of attitude from their GM, as they feel that no matter how well or cleverly they play, events will carry on regardless.

This is often the case with very large campaign-size adventures, such as the Chaosium CoC adventure packs. The fact is, a plot that is to run through a whole series of adventures must have some kind of control to allow the GM to make sure the players don't do something totally stupid or extremely brilliant; either action could ruin the whole game on the very first encounter. The GM often has to 'steer' the players into following the expected route of the scenario designer. The paradox here is that good role-players will often try the unexpected, and if the GM is caught totally unaware, it could botch things up. That's why we're allowed to influence play by dropping subtle hints, or changing minor details as the party goes from one foul-up to another.

▼

S. SUDDELL, Yate: Whatever happened to unbiased journalism, I ask? I speak, no less, of that cad and bounder Wayne Bootleg, alias *Coup-da-gra*. I too frequent the lands of Saturnalia and enjoy it a great deal, but I feel that a great injustice has been done in allowing this tyrant to promote the evil he worships, and no doubt spawns on Saturnalia, in his column. I refer in particular to his comment on the temple he frequents, Renchu. I know of a couple of religions that would be far better to follow. Should anyone doubt this, then I'm sure that Monseigneur Bootleg will confirm, by relating the saga of the Renchu Temple at Durstang!

Go on, Wayne, tell us! For those who aren't aware of it, Wayne does play the part of a prominent character in Saturnalia. He plays in many PBM campaigns, as I'm sure you will be aware if you read his column. Doubtless he will relate tales of some of his notorious PBM adventures in future columns.

▼

NEIL GRANT, Mid-Glam, I'd like to comment on Daniel Roberts'(LBTS#3) assertion that RPGs provoke violence- I suppose he also assumes that readers of detective stories habitually commit untraceable murders in locked rooms. All I can say is, I've never seen an **Agatha Christie** with a government health warning!

▼

PAUL ELLIOT, Doncaster: Role-playing within an historical setting is fun, and the advantage of my bronze-age campaign, unlike CoC and Flashing Blades, etc. is that characters can become moderately famous without feeling that they have 'messed things up'. It might be said that such an approach is wrong for a historical setting, as the reason for this type of campaign is usually to see if history would turn out differently. A valid argument, I agree, but I personally wouldn't feel comfortable playing in a CoC canmpaign where a player-character lawyer called Herbert West becomes President of the U.S.A., or in a medieval game where Robert of Huntingdon (Robin Hood) overthrows King John and takes the crown, causing a civil war in the process. The fun, in my opinion, is in acting out the characters within the setting, and enjoying a *complimentary* feeling of history.

▼

TIM ELLIS: The review of Griffin Island (Shop Window#4) confirms my view on RQIII- it is a nice system, but lacks the 'togetherness' of RQII, and the removal of consistent Gloranthan settings, and the inclusion of unnecessary creatures (orcs, hobbits, etc.) makes RQIII a totally separate game. It merely shares a common ancestory with RQII in the same way that Basic/Expert/etc. D&D is not the same game as AD&D. We would be better off if Chaosium and Avalon-Hill realised that, and stopped trying to equate the two.

Unfortunately, Tim, both you and I and all the RuneQuesters from the "Old School" must realise by now that RQII is dead and buried. A lot of work went into the re-vamp, and a lot of marketing and high wheeling and dealing in its production and distribution. With the forthcoming

cheaper version from Games Workshop in this country, Runequest III is going to be the only RuneQuest to a whole new generation of gamers. Sob.

▼

DALE JENKINS, Bedford: I like Adventurer. A lot. That's why I felt I had to write to tell you about your problem. (Our problem? -ed.) Yes, Your problem. You know, you chappies could do really well for yourselves if you take heed of what I'm saying. Now, about your problem. Well, it's sort of erm... well, embarrassing. You see, you aren't really reaching your whole market with Adventurer. Yes, I know you are appearing on the shelves of W.H. Smiths up and down the country, and in all the best games shops, etc. but your problem is, you see, you are printing it in English. That fact alone cuts out the majority of the population. When you think of the number of countries where only a smack of English is known, where people speak in foreign languages and to whom your pages are intelligible runes. I, of course, read and write English as well as the next... man, but there aren't many like me on planet FRPZING-1. So please, please could you have it translated to Esperanto so we aliens can enjoy it too! Yours with the help of my intergalactic transmissions beam, Oh, and by the way, what about some SF scenarios? Perhaps I could write one called "A day in the life of a mutant..."

Y'know, sometimes, just sometimes, I get a little worried about some of our readers!

▼

JON ASHBY, Antrim: In reply to Nik Edwards (LBTS#4) referring to your article on fanzines. I found the article interesting and helpful. What Mr. Edwards fails to realise is that the majority of the rolegaming public do not edit fanzines! This may come as a shock to him, but it's true.

▼

LINDA LITTLE, Redhill: What about a SF soap- about 6 episodes, done as a parody of the great SF conventions with the cliff-hanging, sexual overtones of a good soap, eg. instead of the ever-present Dark Lord who appears so regularly in books of the genre, we substitute the *Dark Bawd*- an evil entity who marries virile young men and turns them into wizened wrecks. She can only be defeated by locating the *magic arrow* in **DoubleTop!**

Another one to be worried about, I think Linda. Have you tried the BBC? Or Wogan?

AIDAN HARVEY, Leeds: Reading Kevin Hassall's second letter in LBTS#5, one would almost believe that he is sincere! Is he some kind of Cthuloid avatar, preaching the word on blood and sacrifice for the 'higher glories'; what on earth can he mean, Nyarlathotep enjoys inflicting pain, but that doesn't necessarily make him 'evil'. Just as the Aztec belief system accomodated human sacrifice, ours does not (normally...). Therefore, with respect to our society, sacrifice is evil, inflicting pain is evil, and certainly being a slimy creature from the outer voids MUST BE evil!! Aaarghh!! What's that oozing and slopping through the corner of the ceiling?! EEEEk! Oh, it's alright, it's just a cthuloid slime-o-blob about to extract the juices from my head. Whew! For a moment, I thought it was going to be something evil and nasty.

▼

ANTONY JOHNS, Hereford: Can you tell me, what is the sudden fuss all about? First of all a two-part scenario based on his fiction in White Dwarf, then a short occult story in Adventurer, more of the same in Fantasy Chronicles and I see there's to be even more in Adventurer! Who is this Lumley guy and what is all the fuss about?

You forgot to mention the one in Imagine, Aidan, and the ones in Dagon, Weird Tales, Fantasy magazine etc. etc. The man is prolific, Aidan! As for the sudden interest, it is partly coincidence, partly a cross-learning effect (as an article gets published, everybody else reads it with interest and design...), and partly through the man's own charm and salesmanship. Most of all, perhaps, it's because his mythos work is topical; every Cthulhu GM wants to learn about the mythos. With H.P. Lovecraft's work now readily available throughout the U.K. Lumley's work has so far been difficult to get hold of. And that, if you're interested, is why we're importing Lumley books. There, you've just been 'Lumleyed'!

▼

LEO HENDERSON, Notts: I've done it! I've cracked the secret of life! Well, at least I've just found out why your letters page is called "Live By The Sword"! No, don't stop me. It derives from two proverbs/sayings, right? The first one is to do with 'The pen is mightier than the sword', ie. you can hurt someone more by what you say about them than by actually striking a blow, yes? The other one is 'Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword". This is Biblical and means the same as 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' Put these together, and you get something like 'The editor of Adventurer, who lives by the power of the written word, can expect the same kind of written criticism as he gives to others' Right? At least I think so...

Well, you're as near right as I could explain it, so I've decided to adopt your explanation as Adventurer's official rationale. There. A spotter's badge to you.

▼

KIEREN DIMENT, Amersham: "Kindly stop drawing" he said whilst trying to poke his eye out with his thumb. "No, I don't dislike your drawing, it's just that the best RPG monthly keeps on being extremely late. Issue one was probably late, issue 2 was, issue 3, issue etc. etc." he said in a 'listening-to-Marillion-whilst-eating' sort of way, "It's all because this certain bloke called Steve Dillon seems to be cropping up in the pages of 2000AD, delaying the production date of Adventurer. Of course, it's not officially late, it's just that issue 5 was due out in October, not November, unless of course you've folded. If you have folded, I'll, I'll poke my other eye out. So there.

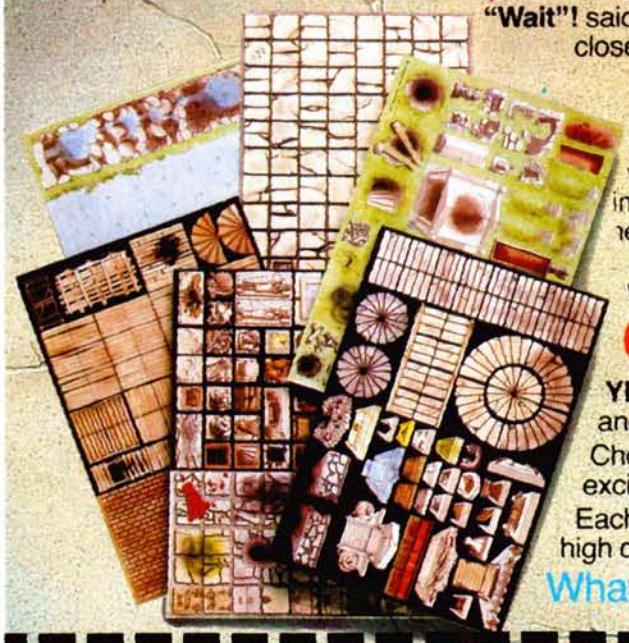
Kieren, we haven't folded. Okay? And I'm not Steve Dillon of 'drawing-cartoons-in-a-2000ad-style' fame. In fact, I'm not Steve Dillon, I'm Stephen Dillon. But you can call me Ste (pronounce Stee!). I'm not a cartoonist, I'm an editor. I'm not a Marillion fan and I'm not Father Christmas!! Ho, ho, ho! And Finally:-

▼

RICH. CRAWLEY, Sheffield: FRP has been going for well over ten years now, and those of us who were in the thirteen to fifteen year age group when it started are now in our mid-twenties, and have usually found the rules systems that suit our tastes. This means that a magazine aimed at mass sales (with attendant advertising revenue) will often by-pass our interests in favour of the massively advertised "munchkin" market games. If Adventurer is to succeed as a mass circulation monthly, it has two possible options. Either to compete directly with White Dwarf, aiming at the twelve to fifteen year-old market and covering the latest cult games; Dredd, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles or whatever, and in so doing risk the stormy seas of a fickle market, or establish a reputation for producing quality material for the games that need it.

Enough for this issue. See you next time. Ste Dillon.

ROLE-PLAY FLOOR PLANS



"Wait"! said Imrahl, the Elf Lord stooped; bringing the flickering torchlight closer to the flagstone floor and the freshly carved runes.

"Then it was as we thought" said Aviolan, "Her heart pounding with anticipation," "They do exist."

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VOYAGES BEYOND

by Wendy Graham

This issue of **Adventurer** should have been a smashing column from me for all of you; shoe-horned in among stylish and pithy reviews there were to be sparkling interviews with the high of the SF universe, complete with pertinent photographs. These latter were to have been garnered at a brace of conventions in one busy week-end, conventions in **Coventry** and **Liverpool** to which I proposed to zoom on your behalf, esteemed reader.

But instead, I have been forced to regale you with a sorry tale of might-have-been since cruel reality instead of this happy fantasy is that on the due week-end, which for once tied in splendidly with the deadlines set by our great and noble leader and Editor, I had *Chicken Pox* of all things, and could only lay a-sick-bed, without even the energy to gnash my teeth (I wanted to go, for goodness sake!). What made it worse is that it is a such a silly bug to catch, and everyone laughed at my sorry state.

Writers of the Future

Enough of my woes though, and on to something different (I'm much recovered now, thank you for asking). First off I'm going to tell you about how you can get into professional print with your fiction, if you care to take the plunge. In the heady days of the '**Golden Era**' of SF, a novice writer could get his chance in one of the SF magazines then published, but now-a-days there is very little between the amateur fanzine and the full-blown professionally published. Even for a great new SF talent, the way is hard and duplicated fanzines, however well-produced and circulated somehow don't count as published.

But for the last year or so there has been a way with the *Writers of the Future* competition, which has been running worldwide. Set up and sponsored before his death by the prolific **L. Ron Hubbard,** entrants stand to win not only cash prizes but the chance to be published in one of the compilations which are produced - the second is on its way over here.

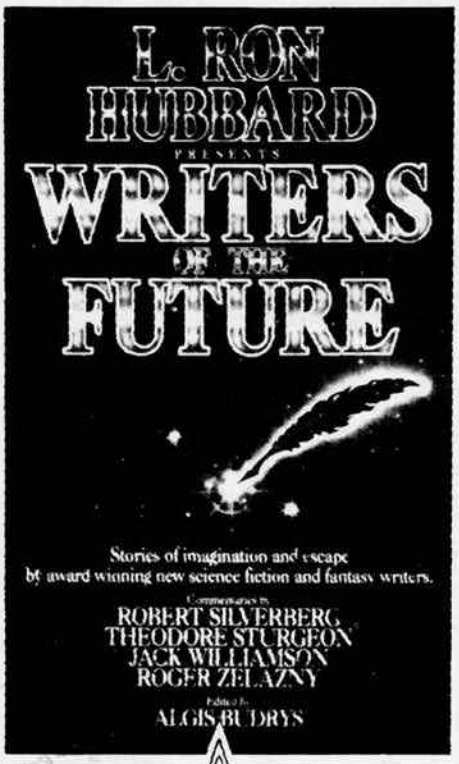
The contest recently had a British finalist in the June quarter- **John Paul Catton** of Northampton. Judges are of the calibre of *Gregory Benford, Frank Herbert, Anne McCaffrey, Larry Niven, Frederik Pohl, Robert Silverberg, Theodore Sturgeon, Jack Williams, Gene Wolfe,* and *Roger Zelazny* (these were 1985's panel), so what an opportunity to have your work judged by the luminaries.

How do you enter? Simple, read on for abridged rules: Send your previously unpublished own work, typed and double spaced of either under 10,000 or under 17,000 words to : *Writers of the Future Contest, Dowgate, Douglas Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2TS.* With certain exceptions you can't have had anything previously published and there are special rules about keeping your work anonymous for the judges, so if you're interested the best thing to do is to write to competion HQ for full details before sending anything.

I've just read the second anthology of winning entries and the standard is very high. But not only are there 15 cracking stories in it, there are also musings on the art of writing in general from Gene Wolfe, Anne McCaffrey, Frank Herbert and Larry Niven. Those pieces alone make it worthwhile for anyone with aspirations towards writing.

So, any of you with a story tucked away somewhere I urge you to enter. You might not win anything, but if you don't enter you certainly won't.

Also available from the above mentioned address is the 1987 SF calendar, illustrated with some fine artwork, excellently reproduced and annotated with the birthdays etc. of just about everyone in the SF world.



Writers of Today

I've also just improved my muscles by reading L.Ron's *Battlefield Earth*, his return to SF writing after a break of many years while he was off (shall we say) doing other things. I'd had a copy of this doorstopper novel for some time but never gotten round to tackling this 1066 page opus. I suppose it's an okay book if you want something to keep you going on holiday, but it is an extreme example of the 'only good alien is a dead one' school of SF, and the human hero is as impossibly 'supermanish' as you can get without actually coming from Krypton. I can't really recommend it for propping up a wobbly table either, since it is so thick that if your table needs that big a prop you're in very big trouble.

Seems now that Mr H. has produced what is known as a *Dekalogy,* (a series or group of ten volumes) in the *Mission Earth* series, which is in the process of appearing. Haven't read any yet.

One must admit I suppose that L. Ron Hubbard's SF is tainted by his Scientology cult, and his writings must be taken with that taint in the back of the mind at all times.

Another SF author is *Frank Herbert,* who's posthumously published collection of short stories has been stirring up a rip-off controversy over **Star Wars.** Herbert states in a foreword to the collection that there are '16 points of identity' between **Dune** and **Star Wars.** I don't know what these points are and I'm not particularly bothered, since Luke Skywalker doesn't turn into a giant worm, but as a writer I can feel for Herbert since I have been at times very very irked (to say the least) when I've known that some of my own stuff has been ripped-off. Sometimes various SF and fantasy universes will contain the same things; it is probably inevitable. Plenty of folk have used Asimov's three laws, and 'beam-me-up' transport systems, simply because of their rightness, I guess.

Talking of Superman reminds me that actor **Christopher Reeve** was recently separated from his appendix in New York, thereby clearly emphasising that he and the invulnerable man of steel are not one and same. His sense of time and place for same surgery were pretty neat though, since Reeve chose the hospital Roosevelt - where the very first appendix operation was performed exactly 100 years ago. Connoisseurs of irony will want to note that the Doctor who performed the first operation, one **Robert Hall**, died of a ruptured appendix in 1897!

Science Factions

Now I'd like to make a brief reply to Nic Coates who took issue with me in a letter which appeared in #4 of **Adventurer** commenting on my first column. Perhaps it is cheating a little to reply in my column since I have more space, but I hope you'll bear with me because I'm going to dip a wary toe in the muddy waters of factions for a column inch or two.

Background first. That first column had a tricky brief: To define SF and explain what it is, with the assumption that those reading it might not know more about SF than the average man on the Clapham omnibus who is so loved by the legal profession, while still writing in such a way that anyone who did know more might still find it an interesting read. In short, tricky. You try it. Anyway, I tried to cram in the history, development, various media (books, films, TV) the writers, fans and the kitchen sink of it all, and sure, it was probably biased, as must be most things which issue forth from a human brain. I wasn't attempting the definitive 3,000 words on SF, rather an American tourist style whistle-stop of the highlights.

I enthusiastically raise three cheers for Norman Spinrad's definition of SF as cited by Mr Coates: "Science Fiction is anything published as science fiction" given a few provisos.

(1): That we take the word *published* to mean the legal sense in that it also covers TV and film.

(2): We assume sanity on the part of the publisher in defining it as science fiction in the first place - a Mills and Boon type book could come out with the wrong cover on saying it was SF and by the definition it would be SF!

(3) We accept that while this is a definition which is perfect for those 'in the know' it is glib and of no use at all for the uninitiated, and it was for those that the piece was primarily written since when it was written neither the editor nor I knew just how initiated the readers were.

Getting round to factions, then. The SF field seems to be well strewn with land mines, where everyone seems to have their own view of what is best and everyone else is wrong, so that it sometimes seems to me that you aren't supposed to watch any SF if you read it and those who read it think that those who watch can't read without moving their lips.

I happen to like **all** SF, what ever the medium and I probably am just as biased as the next bod. So, Okay Mr Coates, you tell me which other authors I should've mentioned? Which other programmes? And why is it criminal to mention **Star Trek** without mentioning Harlan Ellison? Sure he wrote one very fine episode, **'City on the Edge of Forever'** but other great writers wrote others -**Theodore Sturgeon** wrote two. Careful Mr Coates, maybe your bias is showing. Now If I had written about *Star Trek* without mentioning **Gene Roddenberry** I would indeed be suspect (And the great bird wrote a heck of a lot of Star Trek too).

Of course some things which are SF aren't necessarily known to all and sundry as such, for example **The Rocky Horror Show,** which is essentially SF though many of its cult following audience don't know so. A new cast is presently touring the country by the way, and if you haven't been when the show hits a theatre near you I recommend that you do; the atmosphere alone is worth the price of the seat.

Pin back your ears all *Star Trek* fans. Not only is the new film due out in February (Friday the 13th. last time I checked- just the sort of date *Paramount* would choose!), but the Star Trek TV series is back on again.

Those who haven't given up years ago in the near-impossible task of keeping up with the peculiarly incompetent brand of logic which Paramount seems to reserve especially for decisions about Star Trek, won't be surprised to hear that a TV series is once again being mooted as a distinct possibility.

Recent proceedings in America would seem to be;

1. Strong rumours and more-than rumours about a new TV series start to go the rounds. Networks are said to be interested.

2. Paramount completely reject the idea. They apparently decide that any new series will make the marketing of the old series- which still earns them lots of lolly worldwide- too difficult. This decision seems rather hard to credit, since the series has been released on video, which itself has generally been reckoned to kill off much transmission interest.

3. Turn-around time. Yes, Paramount announces that the whole thing is on again. Plans are for a new ship and a fresh crew. Doesn't this remind you of a few years ago? Paramount were going to make a Star Trek series. No they won't, it will be a movie. Oh no, let's make it a TV series. Wait a minute, **Star Wars** is making lots of money, we'll make it a movie. What did we get? We got Star Trek- The Slow Motion Picture.

Star Trek's first pilot episode, **The Cage,** is to be released on video. I don't know when it will arrive over here (if ever), and no-one seems to know whether it will be in black-and-white or colour, or even a mixture of both!

Gene Roddenberry's own version, which I saw when he guested at a Convention over here, is totally in B&W, but news from the States is that they've found a colour copy.

On **Star Trek IV- The Way Back,** which opened in the States yesterday as I write, I hear it is set in 20th. century San Francisco, and Earth is threatened by a gigantic mystery object which is likely to vapourise the planet (sound familiar???). And where on Earth is **UNIT** when you want them...?

In it, *Spock* gets to meet his Mum and Dad again (welcome back **Jane Wyatt**). *Kirk* gets demoted for disobeying orders and *Chekov* is mistaken for a Russian spy! Watch out for the whale and the kidneys. Everything is sorted out in the end and Kirk sets off on another enterprise... (is that a hint or ain't it? I shan't tell).

Stop Press: As I write this I've just heard that the release date for Trek IV has been put back to April 10th.

Reviews

I am indebted to my friend and colleague *Neil Gaiman* for some of this issue's book reviews. He came to my assistance during the aforementioned viral incapacity.

Bridge of Birds
by **Barry Hugart**. Published by **Century** at **£8.95** hardback and **Corgi** at **£2.50** paperback. *(Joint winner of the 1985 World Fantasy Award.)*

A lovely tale this, of ancient China. It is the story of number Ten Ox, a modest young peasant with no wish to be a hero, but when the children of his village are stricken by a mysterious poison he enlists the aid of the great sage Li Kao (Who has a slight flaw in his character).

The book has a rare commodity style, and another rare commodity; a good yarn. It is a joy to read from page 1 to 271 where it says 'The End' (hurrah, it's not a trilogy folks!), though for once I wouldn't mind meeting the characters in a sequal.

Deservedly a winner and highly recommended.

The Golden Horn
by **Judith Tarr,** volume two in the *Hounds and the Falcon* Trilogy. Published by **Bantam Press** at **£9.95.** Hardback.

Fantasy and magic woven into the background of the dramatic and bloody siege of Constantinople in the 13th century. Setting aside my renown dislike of trilogies I enjoyed this middle volume as much as the first, *The Isle of Glass.* Basically the story is of elf-born **Alfred** who has left the monastery where he was raised, and of **Thea,** also elf-born. As

the story progresses, we observe the struggles between the two of them and inside Alf as he attempts to reconcile the monk and the man in him. Alf's dilemma did become a little tiresome at times I thought, and I as reader / voyeur did long to bang his head together. It was all a bit in the classic love story mould of 'we all know they love each other but they don't until the last few pages'.

Best SF of the Year 15
edited by **Terry Carr (Gollancz, £3.95** paperback **£10.95** hardback)

One of the dullest in this normally excellent annual collection. Half of the stories are alright, half unspeakably naff. There is much that I find interesting happening in American SF currently. Unfortunatly *Willian Gibson, Bruce Sterling* and most of the rest of the cyberpunks go unrepresented, as do the interesting Brits- *Geoff Ryman* and co. Some of the stories are tried, others unexciting. Only in *John Crowley's* **Snow**, a look at cold mortality, and *Lucius Shepherd's* crazed **A Spanish Lesson** does the genuine magic appear.

The Colour Out of Time
by **Michael Shea. Grafton £1.95.**

Michael Shea is an ace pastichist. So far he has written two Jack Vance novels. With **The Colour Out of Time** he gives us an *H.P.Lovecraft* book. Strange, shimmering colours infest a flooded New England valley. Two ancient professors and an old woman combat the ancient evil. It's dull, dated, and not very scary, while missing the insane sense of wonder that H.P. was able to produce at his best.

The Thousand Nights and One Night, translated by Mardrus & Mathers. **Routledge Kegan & Paul.**
4 Volumes **£5.95** each, **£20.00** set.

The four book **Thousand Nights and One Night** is a daunting prospect. After an initial hesitation I started reading, and found it hard to stop. **The Nights** is a Chinese-Box of stories within stories. In order to prevent unfaithfulness **King Shahrayar** sleeps with a virgin at night, and has her executed in the morning. However the wise *Scheharazade* goes to his bed and, aided by her little sister, begins telling him stories, pausing as dawn is breaking to continue her tales on the following night. Her stories act as an education for the king, in more senses than one. There are over four hundred stories, some of them - albeit stripped of their sexual, scatological, or political material - well known (Alladin, for example, or Sinbad the sailor), others almost unknown.

I kept promising myself I'd stop when I reached the end of the book I was on. I kept on reading to the end. Whatever you want from a book you can find in the Nights -- from dreams and fantasies to big-bestseller intrigues, crude humour and not-so-crude, simple stories side by side with tales of Borgesian complexity and resonance. If you think you know the stories already, you are in for a big surprise. Kings and princes and towers, battles and djinni and houris, fables and histories and legends: the whole adding up to more than the sum of its parts. I unreservedly recommend it.

Bagdad
by **Ian Dennis. Allen & Unwin £8.95**

Bagdad is a book that takes the Arabian Nights as its starting point to create a Bagdad as unlikely and emotionally as right as the China of Bridge of Birds. A strange book of political upheaval and intrigue, in which each character gets to tell tales, in which the world of heroes and magic and beautiful princesses is just fading into fabulous past and dull reality is taking over: here we find the Ripe Fruit Party and the Purple Man, three identical Caliphs and the mysterious Zardin al - Adigrab. A rich and fruity work that may not be to everyone's taste, but which I enjoyed a great deal.

The Light Fantastic
by **Terry Pratchett, Colin Smythe £8.95** hardback **£1.95 Corgi** paperback

The book that does to fantasy what Douglas Adams does to science fiction. Giggle as Twoflower, the ultimate tourist, teaches the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse to play bridge; snicker at eighty year-old Cohen the Barbarian's quest for soft toilet paper and good dentistry; chortle at the conventions of fantasy lovingly dissected, elegantly eviscerated and hilariously laid out on a slab. This is laugh-out-loud humour, far superior to its predecessor, The Colour of Magic. This is the stuff of which cults are woven, and I loved it. Once again my favourite character was the multi-legged 'Luggage' made of sapient pearwood and eventual custodian of the Octava, Lovely stuff. Read It!.

Downtime, by **Peter Fox. Hodder and Stoughton £9.95.**

I see no reason why private eye novels and science fiction should not mix; after all, we are living in an SF world these days. But Downtime, is a poor mix of genres which evidences the best of both worlds. The setting is 2000AD; we are entering the third millenium, and lucius P.Finn, licensed technological investigator investigates a case of con puter crime. Not much of a thriller. Not good SF. Not much of anything really.

Soldier of the Mist
by **Gene Wolfe. Gollancz £10.95**

Gene wolfe wrote the single best science fiction book of the last decade, the four volume Book of the Sun. It was set in the unspeakable far future, and was narrated by a man with an eidetic (photographic) memory. With Soldier of the Mist he begins the story at Latro in 479BC, in Greece, when gods still walked the Earth.

Latro has sustained an injury in battle. The injury has destroyed his memory, which lasts no longer than eight hours. The book, chapter by chapter, is his message to himself, telling him(and thus, the reader) what happens from the moment he awakes, unable to remember but able to see the gods.

Strange things happen in this book. It's like a hallucinatory Mary Renault novel: the Greek names for places are translated into their English equivalents, rendering the exotic mundane, while our hero is unable to distinguish gods from men (save that other men cannot see the gods), nor remember even his closest friends from chapter to chapter.

Whether the series of books (of which Soldier of the Mist is the first) will carve their niche in literary history in the same way that The Shadow of the Torturer and its succeeding volumes did, I do not know. It's not as satisfactory: elusive and strange, its full significance will not become clear until the final page of the final volume. But it certainly has something...

Howl's Moving Castle
by **Diana Wynne Jones (Methuen £7.95).**

Sophie is a young girl who finds herself seventy years old and housekeeping for Howl, a feckless, occasionally drunken, frequently lovesick young wizard with a Welsh alter-ego and a tendency to fill the house with green slime (must have BBC SF connections!) when he gets depressed. There's a fire demon, a scarecrow, an evil witch, and a great deal of confusion of identity. As with most of Diana Wynne Jones' fiction, it's far too good for kids. She is quite simply the best at what she does.

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TIMEMASTER- The role-playing game where you can become a time traveller. Contains 64-page Travellers Manual, 32-page guide to the continuum, 16-page adventure, 140 back-printed counters, large full-colour map and three 10-sided dice £9.95

The Planet, whatever it was called, sat bloated in the middle of the viewscreen, a confusing mess of brown and blue and streaking white. Not for the first time Master Psychologist **Arven-Ni-Tar** wondered what it could possible, have to do with him. What was he, a run of the mill **Verettan** academic, doing within the imposing confines of a **Torgan** battlecruiser?

The mystery had begun many days previously, shortly after he had finished recording a new series of lectures on twenty-second level stress reactions for transmission to students in the thirty-eight of Veretta's fifty-two inhabited systems. His domestic computer had informed him that an officer of the *Verettan Space Service* wished to meet him urgently - that very day if possible. Arvan had arranged for him to call that evening.

Commander **Loranna-No-Purakin** had bowed elegantly at Arven's modest receiving room, her pale blue Service robes Rippling pleasurably as she made her way to the nearest lev field, floating comfortably between floor and ceiling as it activated on her approach. Arven noticed that her dark hair was fashionably long, the field holding it in a rich halo about here oval face. Her voice was soft and practically unaccented - though if pushed the psychologist might have guessed that she hailed from **Niria.**

"I am glad that you have been able to see me so soon, Master," she began deferentially, Arven entered the posture of dismissal.

"I have few visitors in the evening, Commander. Your coming has livened up an otherwise mundane day."

The officer had smiled, but her posture oscillated uncertainly between apology and command. Arven was intrigued by the combination: a woman accustomed to being obeyed for once unsure how to proceed, he decided. The psychologist remained neutral. No-Purakin's apology became more pronounced.

"I will not detain you long, Master. I have come to ask a.... favour on behalf of the goverment."

The psychologist smiled broadly.

"You are hardly the normal sort of government representate, Commander."

"It is a millitary matter," replied the officer.

Arven's posture remained neutral, but he allowed some of his puzzlement to show in his voice.

"I fail to see how I could be of use in military affairs," he said.

Loranna's own mystification was clear to read.

"We have been asked by the Torgan ambassador for your services. A Torgan warship is currently in orbit with orders to transport you to your destination," she replied.

"And where might that be?"

"They won't say."

Arven was astonished. He must have let it show because Loranna added hastily:

"What they did say was that the matter was one of extreme sensitivity which only you could handle. Moreover it is urgent. They assure you that they will not detain you for very long and that while you are away they will remunerate you at twice your normal rate. You will receive complete cooperation and support while on the assignment and will earn Torga's heartfelt thanks."

Arven was flattered by the request, impressed by the reward, but most of all he was intrigued. So intrigued that his mind had already been made up for him. Nonetheless he couldn't resist asking. "What if I were to refuse?"

The Space Service officer shifted uncomfortably in her lev field.

"You are, of course, perfectly at liberty to refuse, Master but that might be considered er indelicate."

Arven had found himself nodding in agreement. It was seldom wise to refuse the requests of the most

FRONTIER

by Adam Oyebanji

powerful nation in the galaxy ....

Arven's reveries were interrupted by a buzz at the padded doors of his quarters. Its hissed opening admitted a junior Togan Officer.

"Master, my Captain asks if you would be so good as to accompany me to his quarters."

The man's demeamour was one of complete deference, as had been that of everyone Arven had met upon the ship. For the natural Torgan arrogance to be so thoroughly quelled, Arven mused, he must be sorely needed.

The Psychologist followed the Torgan along several of the ship's plushly carpeted corrridors. Numerous works of art adorned the walls and now, as previously, Arven allowed himself to appreciate the understated good taste that had gone into the battlecruiser's decor.

The two of them floated down a lift shaft to another deck and travelled more, corridors before arriving at their destination. Once inside the Captain's quarters, Arven's escort melted noiselessly away and the psychologist found himself alone with two men.

One was clearly the Captain, grey haired and wearing a grey robe belted in the Torggan fashion, its black striped borders denoting his rank. The other's robe was of shimmering green, its borders a pale yellow that somehow managed to match his sallow face with its cold, stellar blue eyes. Of the two it was the Captain who spoke first.

"Master, allow me to introduce myself. I am Captain **Ultan Han**, Torgan Space Force, and this is," he bowed low to the man in green. "Councillor **Sim Porda** from the department of Colonial Administration."

Arven's eyes widened slightly in surprise. While unsure what to expect he certainly had not envisaged meeting an influential member of the Torgan government. It certainly served to explain Han's obvious nervousness. Porda was well known to be no lover of the military and the Captain's smile was a little strained as he said to Arven:

"Please , Master, make yourself at home."

Arven went to the lev field indicated and Counciller Porda sat in the old fashioned bucket seat behind the Captain's desk, leaving Han himself to use a field besides the Verettan. It was Porda who took charge of the conversation, his voice brisk, businesslike, with the efficient dryness of a computer printout.

"Well, Master Ni-Tar, you will doubtless be woundering why Torga has seen fit to arbitrarily drag you to the edge of the known galaxy without so much as a word of explanation."

Arven nodded, through he had not realized that he was at the edge of the known galaxy, or even that it was possible to cover such a distance in the comparatively short time since had bordered the Torgan ship. Arven's Knowledge of Stellography was poor to say the least, but he did know that to be at the edge of the known galaxy and in Torga at the same time meant that they must be somewhere on the rimward egde of the known space with nothing between them and intergalactic nothingness except thousands of light years of uncharted stellar wilderness. With a mental shake he brought himself back to the business in hand.

".... for several years a processs of expansion into the unknown galaxy, establishing colonies where suitable. In doing so one of our frontier squadrons arrived here and found human life. The natives are fairly primitive, having a sub space age technology. Half a year ago we went into occupation, putting troops into the only native settlement of any size, and started making arrangements for the arrival of colonists."

Porda paused, bestowing a withering glance upon Captain Han.

"Since then the military have declared that the planet is unsafe for colonisation, saying that the native population is 'volatile'. The native population is tiny ,a mere twenty thousand, and yet the most powerful army and Space Force in the galaxy say that they cannot control them."

"May I ask why, Councillor?"

Porda looked as if he were chewing on something distinctly odious.

"They claim that the entire planet is insane."

The silence was bottomless. It was Han who toed himself gingerly into its depths.

"I understand your skepticism, Councillor, but how else do you explain the death of nearly a hundred..."

Porda was nearly apoplectic.

"How else do I explain?!" He roared. "How else do I explain?... Try Blithering incompetence on for size, Captain and see how that fits! Damned well, if you ask me!"

He turned to Arven and the hurricane passed, the only sign of its fury the nervous tic that had materialised on the Captain's now pale face.

"What I want from you, Psychologist, is simple. Either a diagnosis of this "insanity" and remedial action, or proof that this **unbelievable** disease does not exist. You are said to be the greatest living authority on abnormalities of the mind in the galaxy: now is your chance to prove it to us."

So that, thought Arven, was it. Torga's military might had been tested and found wanting. The military, wishing to save face, claimed native insanity. Porda, and those like him who distrusted the growing prestige of Torga's military, saw in it a golden opportunity to lessen their crediblity - but quietly: proof of the solidiers' incompetence was a useful weapon to wield against their allies in the government, but mustn't be allowed to detract from Torga's influence abroad.

Arven looked at Porda's predatory features and felt suddenly sorry for the soliders: the very idea of an insane planet was itself madness. They should have come up with a better excuse than that. Still, the formalities had to be gone through.

"I shall need an assistant, Councillor. One familiar with the language. Also access to...

Porda cut him off with a peremptory wave of the hand.

"Han will provide whatever you require," he said, ending the interview.

The walk from the landing ship to ground car was of short duration, but it chilled Arven to his aging bones. Huge white flakes fell out of the grubby sky, driven into his face by a fanged winter wind. The heating elements in his clothes were not enough to stop the chill seeping into the depths of his bowels. All in all he was grateful for the shelter provided by the ground car's plexiglass cockpit.

"Sorry about the weather, Master," apologised the young army Lieutenant assigned to assist him. His round face darkened with guilt: "I should have warned you that it was bitterly clod down here."

"Think nothing of it, young man. It does one good to be exposed to nature in the raw now and again."

Arven looked round about him as the ground car moved away from the landing zone on its noiseless fields.

It had been snowing all day with the consequent result that everything in sight was matted in glittering white fur. Even the silvery bulk of the landing ship now sported a distinctly hoary appearance.

The ground car automatically followed the line of some hidden road, leaving the landing zone in the dwindling distance while the white humps of the native

settlement grew steadily larger. Nearby a white irregularity rose up out of the surrounding smoothness, great icy teeth hanging jewel like from it's indistinct edges.

"What's that?" asked Arven, pointing.

"A ground car, Master," replied the lieutenant, who answered to the name of **Torq**. "The natives shot it apart two nights ago and killed the occupants."

Winter suddenly, cruelly, filled the cokpit around the psychologist. His breath quickened.

"Are we ... in any danger?"

The question didn't come out quite as casually as Arven had intended. In answer the Lieutenant smiled tightly and pointed upwards into the murk. Arven's gaze followed the direction of the soldier's finger. Above him, barely discernible amidst the furries of frozen water, could be seen a brilliant red battle car, it's awesome weaponry aimed reassuringly downwards. Relieved air hissed in its escape from the psychologist's lips.

"What happened to the attackers?" he enquired.

"A battle car pinned them down with confining fire and then the infantry moved in to apprehend them. They shot three men before they were captured."

Arven stared at the lieutenant in stark disbelief. Torq blenched.

"I mean I know I wasn't there myself, Master. But everyone who was is absolutely certain that they aimed to kill... and you won't find a soldier on the planet who doesn't believe they did the same thing in respect of the ground car."

Arven carefully refrained from leaking skepticism. Instead he noted that they were now in the heart of the settlement, its snow roofed buildings pristinely built with new wood: a typical frontier town Arven supposed, never having seen one. No natives were in sight , but in view of the awful weather that was hardly surprising. He turned back to Torq.

"Do you know the identities of the soldiers who took part in this incident?"

"Most of them, Master. The rest I can find out."

"Good. Do so and arrange for them to be free to see me tomorrow. One every... I'll tell you that after I've seen these laboratory facilities of yours."

The facilities that had been set up in the main barracks, situated on a slight rise overlooking the settlement, turned out to be more than adequate. Porda was clearly determined that the military should have no excuse. Torq revealed that on his arrival (shortly before Arven's) he had arranged for a mass of equipment that he had brought with him to be set up for the psychologist. Chief anongst them were state of the art monitors and a computer that held the entire libraries of the ten most respected universities in the known galaxy - Veretta's among them.

Arven itched to get to work. That day he familiarised himself with the lab and drew up a provisional working schedule for himself and Torq. The following morning he started examinations of the men involved in every death since the occupation; then at the natives involved in those incidents and finally at a random batch of natives from both the settlememt and the outlying areas. Raw data was ploughed into the computer, cross referenced and mated with equations, the monstrous mathematical offspring meticulously honed, trained and brought into the adulthood of intelligible answers.

And Arven didn't like them.

He processed his material in three completely unrelated ways - even using the antique and combersome Krey-Ni-Don analysis - to get the same results to plus or -3%.

Meanwhile six men died in various incidents. Processing those brought the margin of error down to 2.6%. Arven stopped working at psychology and burrowed into the subterranean levels of the databanks, unearthing obscure historical treaties and papers on anuthropology and evolution. A vague, spidery pattern emerged and crystallised, the gaps in its design irremediable and its flaws doubtless blanant. But it was the best he could do.

He called Porda.

The meeting took place in Arven's lab. Porda arrived first, blessing the psychologist with an almost effusive smile. His body posture said it all: an anticipation of military humiliation, a sensing of victory. A posture that changed to one of studied neutrality on the arrival of Admiral **Zarka**, commander of the frontier squadron, the gold edging of her Space Force robe glowing sullen in the dim light that forced its way through the window from the sleet filled world outside. Her close-cropped greying blonde hair gave her an aggressive appearance, but did little to diminish the impact of her evident anxiety. Both took their fields with the most perfunctory of greetings, waiting with stilled breath for the oracle to speak.

Arven listened to the gritty suicide of sleet against the window for a moment longer before starting to speak, pacing slowly amongst the tools with which he had become so familiar.

"When I started my investigations," he began, "I truly thought that the difficulties of the task would be minimal, the findings a foregone conclusion. A belief, I think, shared by the Councillor."

Porda tensed, aware for the first time that victory might not be his after all. Arven continued without pause.

"This belief changed almost immediately, however, for every single person who was involved in combat with the natives is convinced that they tried to kill."

"A reflection on the military rather than the natives, I would have thought," said Porda, coldly. Arven smiled enthusiastically, running his hands through unkempt hair.

"My thoughts exactly, Councillor. It is quite possible for a series of accidental deaths to set up such mental reactions: a sixth level traumatic stimulus in conditions of ninth level isolation subject to Ho-Pen analysis gives..."

"Neither Councillor Porda nor myself are familiar with the arcane technicalities of your vocation, Master", interrupted the Admiral, quietly. "If you confine yourself to generalities that will be sufficient for the moment. Your full report will be studied by experts later."

Arven blushed furiously.

"My apologies, Admiral. What I meant to say is that the Councillor's suggestion that your people are deluding themselves to save face is a valid one that had to be investigated-- which I did.

'There is no doubt, Admiral, that the judgement of many of your soldiers has been impaired. All are operating under high levels of stress and their mental abilities have suffered correspondingly. However, the degree of impairment is not such as to make certain the hypothesis that this belief in native behaviour is unfounded.

"Examination of the natives themselves made the delusion theory much less likely." The psychologist displayed a certain amount of agitation as he relived the memory.

"All the natives - not just those involved in the killings - displayed an unbelievably high level of aggressiveness of a type usually associated with a mental condition known as *Shasegawa's Syndrome:* it occurs in one person per sixty million. Little is known about it and the theories surrounding it are for the most part fanciful ramblings, but its effects are fairly simple in explanation: if you will be so good as to watch the viewcube I will demonstrate."

The window became opaque, allowing only access to the sound of the frenzied sleet. But at the bidding of Arven's technology most of the lab turned into three dimensional winter - in its midst a fearsome white furred quadruped. Zarda drew her breath in recognition.

"This," explained Arven. "is the galaxy's most voracious predator, the *Olanian Snow Beast.* Owing to the inhospitality of its enviroment it eats seldom, which means it can't afford to miss a meal..."

The animal lay invisible in its winter white. A large herbivore passed close by and...

Everyone in the lab missed it. One moment there had been two animals, the next a blur of motion, a half heard howl and the hapless herbivore was being dragged out of sight, red, trampled snow alone speaking with dumb eloquence of its passing.

"I once saw one of those things go through a patrol of six troopers before anyone thought to shoot it down," mused the Admiral. "I hope never to see one in the flesh again."

"A sentiment most would second," agreed Arven. "But watch this. This was taken on one of those rare occasions when one beast meets another in a dispute over territory."

Again winter filled the room, revealing two of the monsters snout to snout, hackless stiff in the frigid blast. Then again the awful blur, brief impression of evil fangs and one of the animals was sloping off, head and tail low in defeat. The scene vanished.

"What I want you to notice about that,"

said Arven, "is that not a single hair on those animals was touched, despite their capacity and enjoyment of killing. Watch."

Again the same wintry scene, but this time slow, its movement as frozen as the weather, revealing the senseless blur as a delicate, finely poised dance of feint and counter feint, the loser deftly manipulated to a stance of abject submission, where actual combat would have resulted in its immediate slaughter.

"That, believe it or not, is normal behaviour: few animals seriously harm their own kind and humans are no exception. Their fights are parodies, staged, make believe. But the fictional result is respected as reality." "Isn't it a little fanciful to draw comparisons between mindless animals and humanity?" asked Porda skeptically.

The psychologist was clearly delighted at the Councillor's challenge. He deactivated the Politician's lev field, bringing him back to the floor, and walked over to him, his body posture one of utmost respect.

"Hit me, Councillor."

Porda was nonplussed.

"I can't do that, Psychologist. I... have no reason."

"Look upon it as an intellectual exercise, Councillor. A demonstration of the difference between man and the mindless beast."

Sweat stood out on Porda's forehead like an archipelago of glassy islands, his muscles bunched and writhed but his right arm, drawn back to deliver a blow, would not move.

"I... can't!" Porda sagged with the effort, a hint of respect in his eyes, of belief.

"Neither could anyone else," said Arven soothingly. "To be able to strike a submissive member of one's own species would be grossly unnatural - would break Nature's cardinal rule that behaviour must contribute to the survival of the species: killing your own does not.

"Likewise, when we fight - with all due respect, Admiral - we play at it. Fleets of aggressively marked ships fire to miss, to split up and manoeuvre the enemy into the position where a real fight would end in defeat. Armies do the same. Soldiers here have herded the natives with their weapons - marched out in bright uniforms to show them that they have no chance. The normal man would surrender at once, defeated without a fight.

"Someone born with Shasegawa's Syndrome lacks this natural mechanism. Invite him to hit someone and he will do so, give him a gun and he will use it as it is meant to be used - to kill, quickly, efficiently. No second chances. Such people are kept in high security isolation because the harm they are capable of causing is so great. What you have here are twenty thousand incredibly dangerous lunatics who would kill - will kill - every Torgan on the planet as soon as the opportunity arises. You are a pretend army faced with real fighters. It seems to me that if you do not withdraw your forces willingly you will substain ever increasing non accidental losses until military and political pressures force you to withdraw anyway."

The silence was full of calculation. Defeat. Arven gave them the only consolation he could think of.

"It might interest you to know that you're sitting on an archaeologist's dream: proof of the Asylum theory. Universities would pay a lot of money to study this place - even if only from a distance."

"Why, Master?" Porda looked hopeful, eager to salvage something from the wreckage of his plans to bring down the military. For his part Arven was only too keen to display the result of his extra curricular research.

"What is now the known galaxy was once part of a larger whole many many thousands of years ago known as the Croavian Empire. Who they were or where they came from no one is sure, but they were the ancestors of every human race in the galaxy - and they had Shasegawa's Syndrome to a man. Sometimes in the darkness of their evolutionary past,failure to control aggression became necessary for their survival, though no one knows why.

"Most of what we know of that period of history has been pieced together from legend, but it's clear that the mad Croavians exploded across the galaxy in an orgy of war, wiping out all opposition. Having done that they fought amongst themselves for millenia until somehow or other they established a form of universal government: the Empire.

"Naturally the Croavian madness was a threat to stability and successive emperors bred it almost out of existance. Towards the end, just before their civilisation collapsed, these 'mavericks' were sufficiently abnormal for them to be placed on an isolated planet and left to themselves."

"An asylum," interjected Zarka.

"Exactly," said Arven. "Its existence has generally been mythical, but it was said to be located towards the rim and its existence would validate many previously discredited record. I think this is it and if so its value to academics should easily offset its value as an economically dependant colony.

The Councillor had brightened considerably.

"You've given us much to think about, Master," he said. Somewhat impulsively Porda held out his hand. "You have done well and deserve the thanks of all of us." He paused, eyeing the psychologist in his calculating fashion. "I trust you will respect our need for confidentiality?"

Arven smiled.

"Of course, Councillor. All my dealings with clients are confidential."

Arven awoke sweating, straining against the fields of force that had been nursing him through the ship's artificial night. Instead of the glow of a job well done that had surrounded him on his return journey for the past three days, he could feel only anxiety. His ears burned, trying to pick up the slightest hint of abnormality, but none could be found. The dull clicks and damped hums that formed the everyday background sounds aboard the battlecruiser were just as they always were: dull clicks and damped hums. Arven shrugged to himself, blamed some unremembered nightmare and closed his eyes to return to the folds of slumber.

Then it hit him. The small inconsistency that had been at the back of his mind all along, that he had subconsciously chosen to ignore.

The small size of the native settlement, the clean wood of the houses. Not an ancient world, but a new one. It was indeed a frontier world, but it was someone else's frontier: a world truly on the lunatic fringe...

The face of Master Psychologist Arven-Ni-Tar was suddenly ashen grey and aged as he paged a frantic call to the Captain.

Admiral Zarka stared at the display sphere. Inside a representation of 'Asylum's' solar system. Inside sparkling electronic gems denoting the twelve ships of 18th Frontier Squadron.

Except there were eleven. Then ten.

"No response from either '**Tiriann**' or '**Minn**', Ma'am."

Nine.

"Order all units to battle stations, defence formation round flagship."

Eight.

"'**Kissi**'s opened fire ma'am, B36-12-09, but am unable to get reading on target."

Seven.

"Order all units to concentrate fire round '**Kissi**' 's last known position and her target area."

Six.

"What's happening out there?"

Five.

Suddenly Zarka's mind made the same sickening lurch as Arven's had only moments before. The Beast was coming for them and cloaked in the winter black of deep space. No warning growl, no display of power, just the brutal reality of death.

Zarka had no more time for thought. She joined the vapourised materials that had been her flagship.

Men had fallen out of the sky in their hundreds, like a falling of leaves. But these leaves were white and on falling hid themselves in the glittering snowfield. The red suited Torgans had fought as only they knew how, as the best army in the galaxy, but the battle had been short, the prisoners few.

They stood clotted in scarlet lumps, stripped of weapons, deprived of dignity, too shocked for tears, too sickened for words. Their captors capered amongst the carnage laughing and gestering, the madness bursting in their eyes like novae.

But to them, to these white wearing lunatics, nothing could be further from the truth. This was no madness.

To the men of Earth's expanding empire it was glory.

ONE MANS MEAT

Making the Most of Poison in Role Playing Games

Poison is a sadly neglected subject in most RPGs. *Gary Gygax* finds it 'Distasteful' and *Basic Role-Playing* based games (Runequest, Call of Cthulhu) hardly discuss it at all. Presumably the consensus amongst games designers is that poison is just too lethal and not to be encouraged. But poison is not just for killer campaigns. It is not even necessary that anyone actually be poisoned; the mere presence of the stuff can suggest scenarios. For example: the player characters are hired by a rich patron who lives in fear of poisoning (many medieval Princes did) - he may dispatch the adventurers to seek new and better antidotes. Perhaps everyone entering his city is searched for poisons, in which case our PC carrying his trusty anti-lycanthrope wolfbane might be suspected of being an assassin. And so on.

All too often in games, poison occurs as a nameless substance with a few rules attached. Perhaps it is thought that 'known' names will detract from the otherworldly atmosphere, and that GMs should invent their own. However, 'real' poisons, ie. ones that occur in our world, have the advantage that the commoner ones will be known to most players and so will be much more atmospheric. An invented name will need initial explanation; mention a 'Type D ingestive poison' and you're back in the world of dice and rulebooks; but say 'Deadly Nightshade' and the players can almost smell the bitter purple-black juice.

That's Death (in the real world)

"The fact is that prior to modern chemistry, there were virtually no quick-acting toxins you could slip to someone unbeknownst or on the point of a weapon...The problem was usually to disguise the taste. In any event...he would hardly drop dead at once."

"Thud and Blunder", an essay by Poul Anderson.

Whilst many role-players don't give a damn about realism, others will know that an infusion of rationality can make the game more enjoyable in the long run and can even provide inspiration. Game poisons are far too fast acting, thus missing out on an essential ingredient of interesting roleplaying: Suspense. By slowing the action time of at least some poisons new possibilities arise. Will the *Blade Venom* cripple the Troll before he makes mincemeat of our weary hero? Can the investigators get their friend to a doctor before the *Cobra Venom* kills her? On the subject of Blade venom, its traditional role was a method of killing the victim *even if* he survived the initial melee, not as a 'chemical bullet' (though some of the paralysing poisons might help to slow him down).

The following rules are intended to be used in addition to the basic mechanics of saving throws, resistance rolls, etc. Unfortunately, it is impossible to give details that will be compatible with all systems. Since my favourite system, Basic Role-Playing, is lacking in all but the barest mechanics of poison the notes are biased in that direction. Differences specific to AD&D are given in square brackets and brief explanations are also given to aid conversion to other systems.

Speed of Action

For ease of play, all poisons are categorised by the speed with which they inflict damage. The speeds given assume that an average character has around 12 HPTS; if your players have characters with lots of HPTS (eg. higher level D&D characters) the DM may need to increase the number of Damage Points inflicted each $^1/_2$ minute, 5 minutes etc. [Hit points in D&D cover so many factors other than plain physical damage that it must ultimately be left to the DM to adapt these rules to his or her own campaign.]

Category:	Speed:
Instant:	As per standard rules: total damage inflicted up to 12 seconds, ie. 1 melee round [1-2 segments], after taking
Immediate:	1 point of damage per $^1/_2$ minute, ie. 2MR [5 segments]
Rapid:	1 point of damage per 5 minute, ie. 1 turn [5 rounds]
Moderate:	1 point of damage per Hour
Slow:	1 point of damage per 12 Hrs
Chronic:	1 point of damage per week or more

The first five categories assume a single dose, where a dose is that amount of poison calculated to do harm, whether it be the number of deadly nightshade berries generally agreed to be fatal or the quantity of venom delivered by a snake bite. If more than one dose is taken in rapid succession each must be resisted [saving throw made] separately and each will cause its normal amount of damage. Example: **Professor Forthby** is hit by 2 curare-tipped arrows. He fails both resistance rolls and will therefore take 2 points of damage every 5 minutes.

Chronic poisoning differs in that it requires repeated exposure to the toxin. Doses must be given at least one week apart, and no resistance roll/saving throw is necessary. Each dose will cause 1 point of damage, which the GM may prefer to deduct from CON or other characteristics since it will not heal of its own accord (otherwise Hit Points could be regained normally between doses and the poison would have negligible effect).

Potency

This is a measure of how likely it is that a person will be killed by a given poison [for AD&D the given potencies should be multiplied by 3 to bring them into line with those in the DMG]. As a guideline for other systems, potency 12 has a 60% chance of killing Mr. Average (CON: 10, HPTS: 12) whilst potency 24+ will always kill him.

Note: The potencies given in the reference list, especially those of animals, do not correspond to absolute strength. One snake may have a more powerful venom than another, but if it secretes it in much smaller quantities the bite may be less deadly so it is considered less potent. Also, statistics in modern textbooks subsume natural hardihood and medically-treated cases into the same survival rates, so most of the potencies given here are estimates not hard facts.

Use

Most poisons have to be either swallowed or enter the bllodstream; the incorrect method may be useless.

Ingestion - Most poisons are administered this way. However, most have an unpleasant, usually bitter, taste and must be disguised with strong flavours, eg. a rich spicy sauce.

Insinuation - is the normal method for animal venoms through bites or stings. Alternatively, extracted venom or a paste made from poisonous plants can be applied to weapons, to similar effect. However animal venom may be difficult and dangerous to extract, and any blade venom will quickly spoil if exposed to air.

Contact - A few poisons can damage intact skin, though this is not lethal.

Inhalation - Poisonous gases and vapours abound, especially in recent era games. Most are merely noxious vapours that prevent the victim from breathing clean oxygen-rich air, but some are poisonous in their own right. Nerve gases and such like are more the province of wargames and so have been omitted from this article.

Effects

These are given to aid the GM in role-playing poisoned NPCs and in describing symptons to afflicted PCs. The symptons may have been greatly simplified; anyone wishing to know the full gory details can consult the books listed at the end of this article. The most common symptons have been grouped under keywords to save space in the reference list.

Keyword	Symptons	Initial Location
General	Acute Stomach upset, convulsions	Abdomen
Cardiac	Heart Slows and Stops	Chest
Mental	Confusion, Delirium, Coma	Head
Paralysis	Numbness, Muscular Paralysis	Any
Necrosis	Gangrene	Any

For Games using Hit locations, first affected location is given. Subtract Damage from that location and total HP until the location is down to zero, then from total HP only (the exception is Necrosis, which may maim a limb and should therefore continue to affect the afflicted location).

Herbal Poisons:

These are the most widely available of all poisons. Anyone with sufficient botanical knowledge can obtain these poisons in their natural state, whilst in dried or potion form they can be bought from most apothecaries.

Monkshood (Wolfbane, Aconite)
Rapid, potency 25. Effect: Paralysis. Use: Ingested. Can also be insinuated, whereupon it has a potency of 8. Medicinally used as a anaesthetic rub for muscular pains, rheumatism, etc. [I was alarmed to see this, the deadliest of British plants, listed in the DMG as a sedative!].

Deadly Nightshade (Belladonna)
Rapid, potency 22. Effect: Mental. Use: Ingested. A dilute solution was used as eye drops by Italian women during the Renaissance, since it causes the pupils to dilate attractively - hence its other name meaning 'Fair Lady'.

Hemlock
Moderate, potency 20. Effect: General. Use: Ingested. A brew of this herb is supposed to have been used for Socrates' execution/suicide.

Yew
Moderate, Potency 18. Effect: General. Use: Ingested. The wood of this tree being ideal for bows, it was grown in churchyards where it was safe from grazing animals.

Curare
Rapid, potency 18. Effect: Paralysis. Use: Insinuated, especially on arrows and darts. A mixture of plants made into a paste, it is available only in South America.

Hellebore
Moderate, potency 16. Effect: General. Use: Ingested.

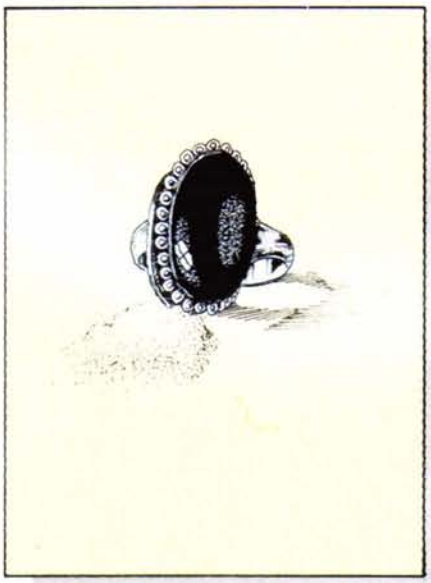
Foxglove
Moderate, potency 12. Effect: Cardiac. Use: Ingested. Source of the heart drug digitalin.

Black Bryony
Immediate, potency 10. Effects: General, blisters. Use: Ingested, contact.

Buttercup, Crowfoot, Old Man's Beard
Rapid, potency 8. Effects: General, Ulcers. Use: Ingested, Contact - used by beggars to induce foot ulcers and so arouse sympathy.

Bitter Almonds and other Fruit Kernels
Slow, potency 5. Effect: General, but sometimes none apparent. Use: Ingested. Obviously more dangerous in large amounts (30 or more almonds) but difficult to administer.

Ragwort
Chronic - affects CON. Effects: poor Appetite, jaundice. Use: Ingested.



Fungal Poisons:

Toadstools are less commonly used deliberately but are a frequent source of accidental poisonings.

Death Cap, Destroying Angel
Slow, potency 25. Effect: General. Use: Ingested.

Panther Cap
Moderate, potency 12. Effect: Mental. Use: Ingested.

Fly Agaric
Moderate, potency 6. Effect: Mental. Use: Ingested. This, the classic red toadstool with white spots. Used by Lapp shamans, and by herders to attract their reindeer, who love it. Has been suggested as a possible source of Santa Claus imagery!

Ergot
Moderate, potency 4. Effects: General, necrosis. Use: Ingested, usually as bread (ergot is a disease of rye and was quite common in the past).

Animal Venoms

All the animal venoms listed here are insinuated - what might happen if any were ingested I don't know. It is possible for a skilled person to extract the venom from a snake without killing it, but the gruesome process needed to obtain frog venom is certainly lethal to the poor frog, and the aquisition of pure spider or scorpion venom would, I think, be almost impossible.

Funnel Web Spider
Rapid, potency 18. Effects: General, Extreme Pain, Asphyxiation. Found in Australia.

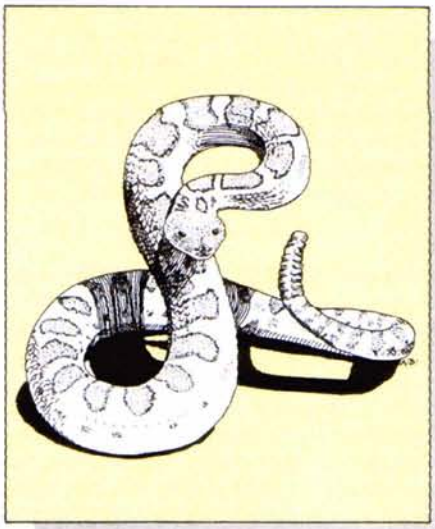
Brown Recluse Spider
Moderate, potency 12. Effect: Necrosis. Found in USA, Central and South America, Australia. Related Species (less potent) are found in Southern Europe, Southern Russia, China and Japan.

Black Widow Spider
Immediate, potency 10. Effects: General, Extreme Pain, Anxiety. Found mainly in USA, but related species occur in most warm climates.

Tarantula
The huge jungle spiders known as Tarantulas are not poisonous to humans, though their bites are large and easily infected, especially if the offending spider is a carrion feeder. However, the original tarantula is a Southern European Wolf Spider which **is** poisonous.
Moderate, potency 5. Effect: Necrosis. In the 18th century the bite was believed to cause hysteria, the cure for which was a dance, the Tarantella (named after Taranto in Italy).

Scorpion
Rapid, potency 10. Effects: General, severe pain, watering eyes. Found in Southern USA, Central America, Brazil, North and South Africa. Other less potent species are found in warm climates worldwide. All are immune to their own venom, indeed their blood is a useful antidote in emergencies.

Poison Arrow Frog
Instant, potency 18. Effect: Paralysis. The frog is found in South America. The poison occurs on the skin where it kills bacteria and fungi that thrive in the warm damp climate; it is extracted from the skin by heating, and applied to weapons. There is no known antidote.



Snakes:

Snake venom is reasonable easy to extract and will keep indefinitely (in dry form only). Modern antidotes are widely available.

Asps

Asp is merely the ancients' name for any venomous snake. The one that killed Cleopatra was probably an Egyptian Cobra (which was of course that land's symbol of royalty).

Black Mamba

Moderate, potency 30. Effect: General. Found in Africa south of the Sahara. Other Mamba species are almost as venomous (potency 20-25).

Cobras

Slow, potency 15. Effects: General, Paralysis, Necrosis. Found in Africa and Southern Asia. A few Cobra species can spit venom up to 2m with accuracy.

Death Adder

Moderate, potency 12. Effect: Cardiac. Confined to Australia.

Pit Vipers

Slow, potency 12. Effect: Internal Haemorrhaging. Found in USA, Central America, Central and Southern Asia, Japan.

Carpet Viper, Puff Adder

Slow, potency 12. Effects: General, Haemorrhaging. Africa, Near East, Southern Asia.

RattleSnakes, Coral Snakes

Moderate, potency 10. Effects: General, Necrosis in Severe Cases. Found throughout The Americas.

Common Adder

Moderate, potency 3. Effect: Local Pain and Swelling. North and Central Europe. Other more Souther and Eastern species are a little more venomous (potency 4-6).

Obviously Monster Venoms can be created as faster and/or more potent versions of their mundane cousins, eg. Manticore venom might behave the same as Scorpion Venom but have a potency of 20 or more. Or use the rules to create a basic poison and add weird, possibly magical, effects. For example, Basilisk Venom could be an immediate potency 15 ingested poison where each point of damage represents a portion of flesh turning to stone!

Chemical Poisons

Access to these poisons depends on the era and the constraints of law. In recent-era games it may be possible to manufacture a poisonous compound with the aid of a well-stocked Lab and a Chemistry or Pharmacy Skill. The list here is necessarily short, covering only a few familiar substances.

Lead

Chronic - loss is normally of CON. Use: Ingested. Sources include Paint, Anglers' Weights, Shot, Water Pipes, Drinking Vessels. Also a contact poison when found in old cosmetics - here it affects not CON but APP [Charisma/Comeliness] (remember Glenda Jackson's 'Queen Elizabeth I?).

Mercury (Quicksilver)

Chronic - affects both CON and DEX. Use: Inhaled. The vapours used to be a health hazard in the hat trade, hence the saying 'Mad as a Hatter' (loss of Dexterity is intended to simulate twitching and general lack of co-ordination). Note that a single ingested dose of Mercury has little effect.

Antimony

Moderate, potency 15. Effect: General. Use: Ingested; found in the old medicine 'Tartar emetic'. Known of since c.1000 B.C.

Arsenic

Moderate, potency 20. Effect: General. Use: Ingested; arsenious oxide is colourless and tasteless and thus was a favourite with murderers. Compounds of arsenic have been known since c.400 B.C; the element was first described c.1220 A.D. Nowadays found in a range of weed and pest-killers.

Cyanide (HCN, prussic acid)

Immediate, potency 25. Effect: Mental. Use: Ingested, Inhaled. Discovered 1782. Note that gas victims may recover if rescued in time and given fresh air.

Strychnine

Rapid, potency 20. Effects: Heightened Perceptions, Convulsions. Use: Ingested - has an exceptionally bitter taste. Discovered 1818 (originally extracted from a tropical vine).

Chloral (Knockout Drops)

Moderate, potency 10. Effect: Cardiac. Use: Ingested - normally used in small amounts as a sedative. A few drops added to alcohol make the well-known 'Mickey Finn', used in the past by bartenders to sedate violent drunks. Discovered 1869, Chloral is cheap and easy to synthesize.

Treating Poison Victims

Before any damage can be healed, the poison must be arrested using First Aid, Treat Poison, an antidote, or magic. Only one attempt can be made with each method.

If the victim has *half or more* of his total Hit Points left, First Aid may be effective:

Ordinary Success - Poison is slowed to next category (slow poison is stopped).
Special Success - Poison is slowed by 2 categories (moderate poison is stopped).
Critical Success - Poison is automatically stopped (no further damage taken).
Fumble - Healer is poisoned too, though at half potency (healer may accidentally swallow whilst sucking venom from a bite, or get poison into a cut or into his eyes).

A successful *Treat Poison* is equivalent to critical *First Aid* (a special or critical *Treat Poison* may be considered to heal damage already done).

If the victim has *less than half* his total hit points left, Treat Poison works in the way described above for First Aid and a critical First Aid will merely slow the poison by one category.

Antidotes have potencies just like poison; each potency level of antidote will neutralise one potency level of poison. Thus cobra antidote would need to be potency 15 to be foolproof.

Magical treatment depends on the system and so will not be dealt with here. Once the poison is arrested any damage can be healed naturally or magically as appropiate.

Note: in real life, sucking the venom from a snake bite or causing a poison victim to vomit is **not** advisable; professional medical help is far safer.

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BY ANN BROOMFIELD

I'M AWAKE. BUT I'M DAMNED IF I'LL LET THAT BLOODY CHICKEN KNOW IT.
STOP CROWING, BLAST YOU.
UNGH, SEVEN PINTS A NIGHT IN TOO MANY FLEET STREET PUBS REALLY DOESN'T PREPARE YOU FOR EARLY MORNINGS IN A COUNTRY HOUSE WITH A FARM ATTACHED.
ESPECIALLY NOT ONE THAT'S —
NO. NOT GOING TO THINK ABOUT THE DEMON, NOR THE DOG. NOR THE SKULL ON THE SKY.
WHAT ABOUT THE STORIES I HAVE TO WRITE FOR THE 'CRIER'? GOT TO MAKE MY MONEY SOMEHOW...
...HAVEN'T GOT A RICH DADDY LIKE CASSIE. AND I'M DEFINITELY NOT LOADED LIKE...
WHIPLASH
Red Road
WRITTEN BY WARREN ELLIS
ILLUSTRATED BY STEWART (STAZ) JOHNSON.

DENNY, I THINK I'M GOING TO -
GO UP TO THE TOILET, CASSANDRA. NO POINT IN YOUR STAYING HERE.
LORD WHIPLASH, I... WHAT IS IT?
I SHOULD HAVE CONSIDERED THAT OBVIOUS, LADY CIELHENGE.
IT'S BLOOD.
BLOOD AND BONES.
DENNY! WHAT ON EARTH NOW?!
ANOTHER WARNING, HARRY.
LIKE THE SHADOW, AND THE DEMON, AND EVEN THE -
DOG! WHERE IN HELL D'YOU THINK YOU'RE -
- GOING?
...WELL, I'M NOT GOING OUT TO FETCH HIM...

MAYBE WE WON'T HAVE TO.
GOOD GRIEF. THE DOG ISN'T...
THAT'S RIGHT...
...THE DOG ISN'T COVERED IN BLOOD...
...THERE ISN'T ANY BLOOD.
HARRY, GO GET CASSANDRA, WE'RE TAKING A LITTLE OUTING. LADY CIELHENGE - BEFORE WE TURNED IN LAST NIGHT, YOU MENTIONED A VILLAGE CLOSE TO THE HALL. CENGELY, I BELIEVE IT WAS CALLED
YES, THAT'S RIGHT...
THAT'S WHERE WE'RE GOING. I THINK IT MAYAID OUR INVESTIGATION.
LORD WHIPLASH... DO YOU HONESTLY HAVE ANY INKLING AS TO WHAT IS HAPPENING TO MY HOME? THE DEATH'S HEAD, THAT... THING, THIS HORRIFIC... IMAGE, IF THAT'S WHAT IT IS...
'YES. I DO HAVE AN 'INKLING'.'
'SOMEBODY, SOMEBODY VERY CLOSE TO THIS PLACE, WANTS YOU OUT OF CIELHENGE HALL. I DON'T KNOW WHY... BUT NOW I'M HERE...
'...I THINK THINGS WILL GET A LOT, LOT WORSE.'

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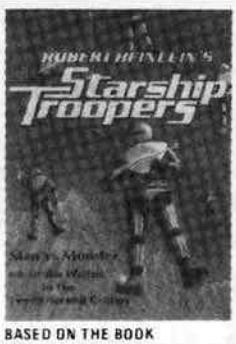

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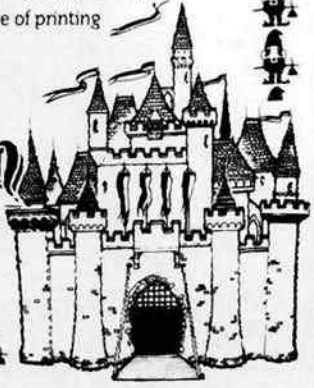

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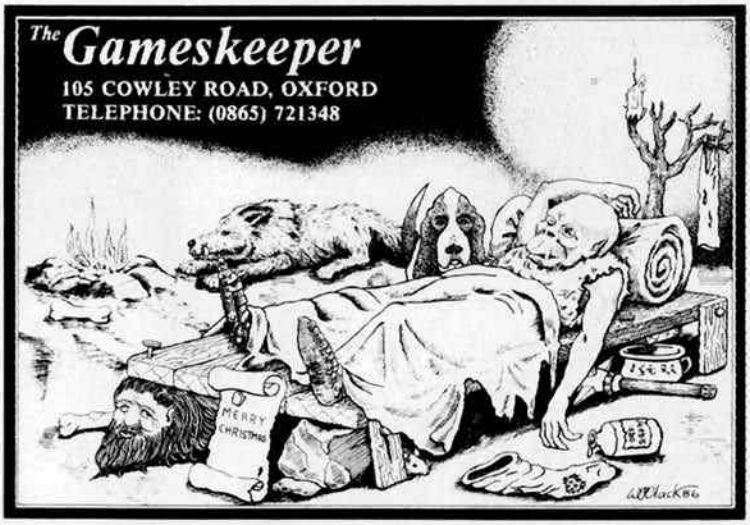

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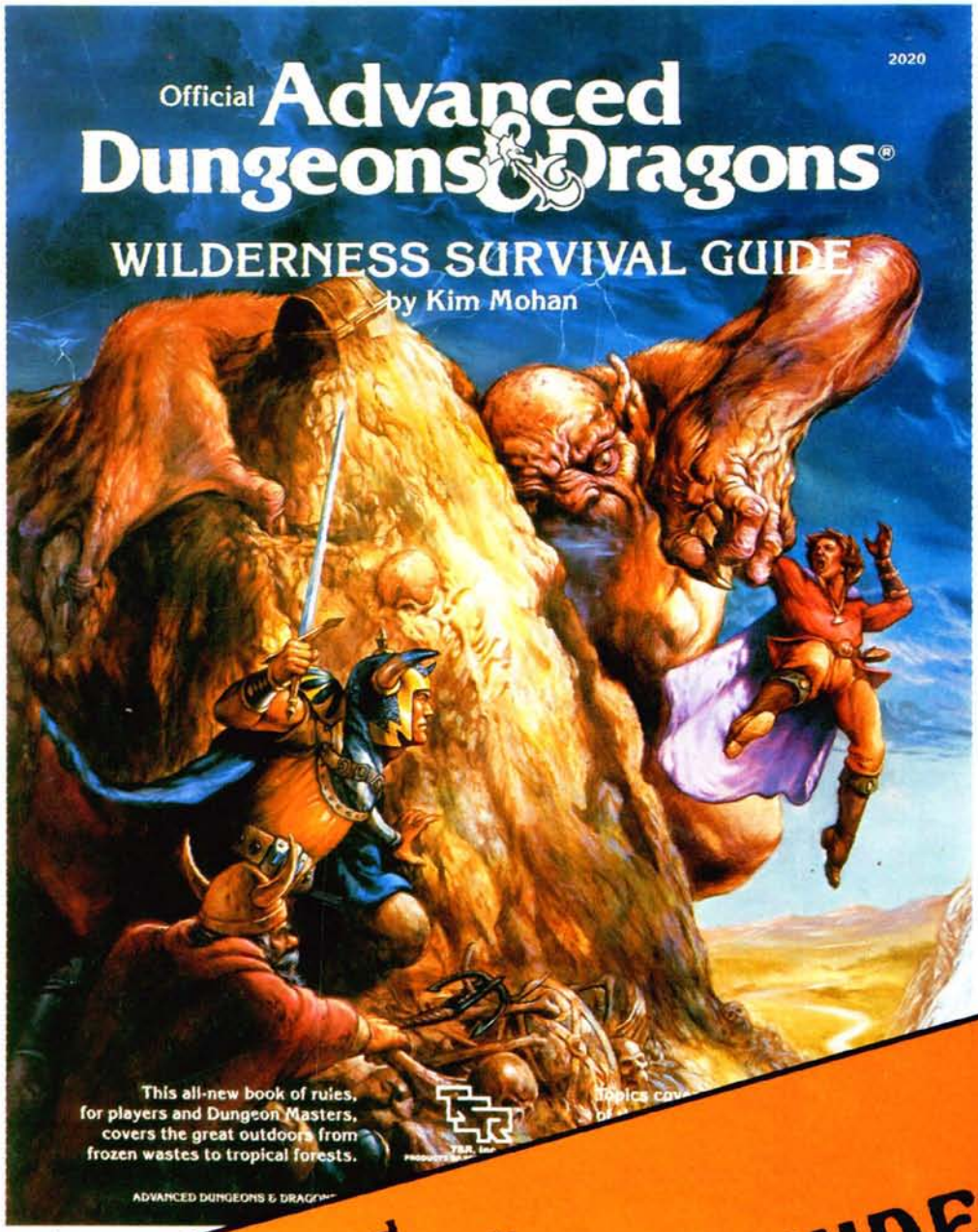
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